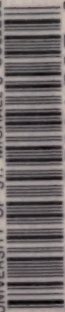


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LIFE OF MARY WARD

Foundress of the Institute of the B.V.M.







*Yours ever
Marie Ward.*

*From the original oil-painting (circa 1620) in the possession of the Nuns
of the English Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Augsburg, Bavaria.*

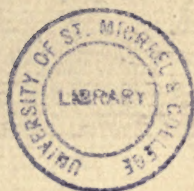
Life of Mary Ward

Foundress of the Institute of the B.V.M.

COMPILED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

With an Introduction by the

RIGHT REV. ABBOT GASQUET, O.S.B.



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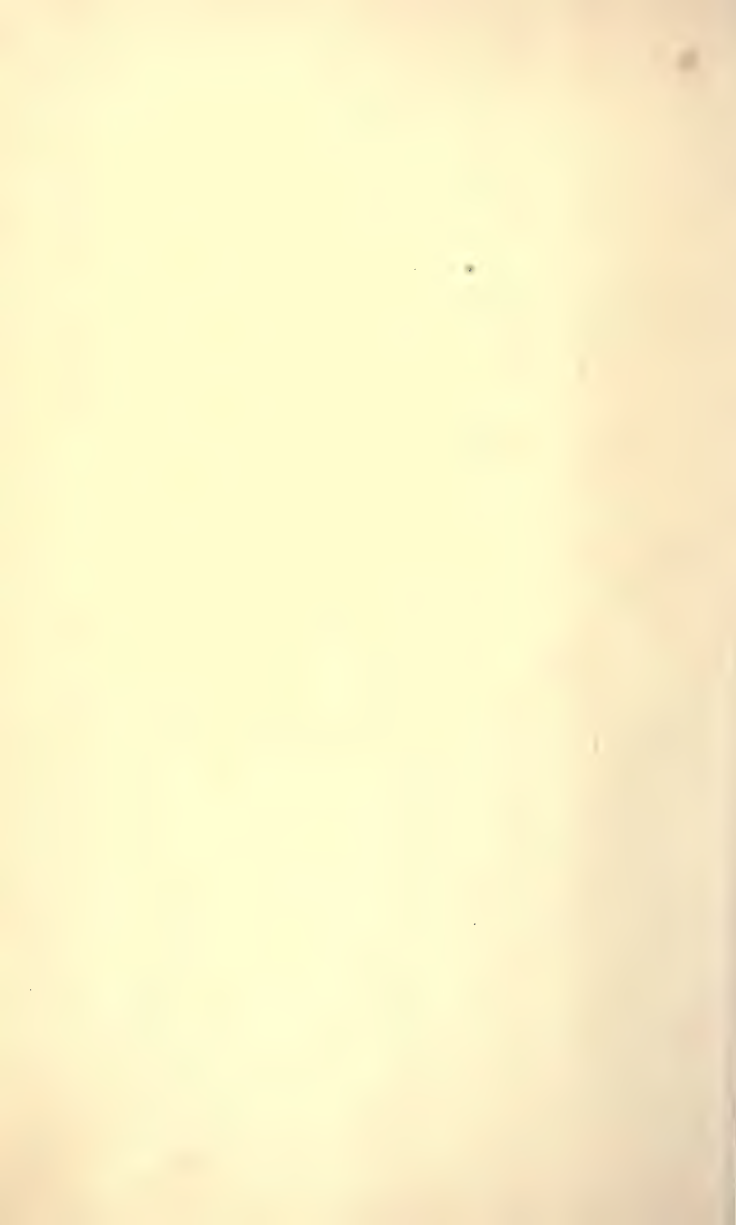
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

THIS Biography, as well as the other lives of Mary Ward, published since 1885, has been compiled chiefly from that of Sister Mary Catherine Chambers, edited by Father Coleridge, S.J.

Thanks are due to the Comtesse de Courson for her kind permission to make use of the interesting account of Mary Ward in her work, *Episodes des Persécutions d'Angleterre*, which has been largely drawn upon in writing the present "Life."

DECLARATION.

IN conformity with the decree of Urban VIII of the year 1625, we declare that in all we have herein written respecting the life and virtues of Mary Ward and other persons mentioned in this Biography, we do not in any way mean to anticipate the judgments of Holy Church, but submit in all things to Ecclesiastical Authority.



DEDICATION

TO THE MEMORY OF

MARY WARD'S DEVOTED DAUGHTER,
MOTHER MARY JOSEPH EDWARDS,

AS A TOKEN OF GRATITUDE

WHICH WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS

FOR HER LIFE-LONG LABOURS IN BEHALF OF

THE INSTITUTE OF THE B.V.M.



Introduction.

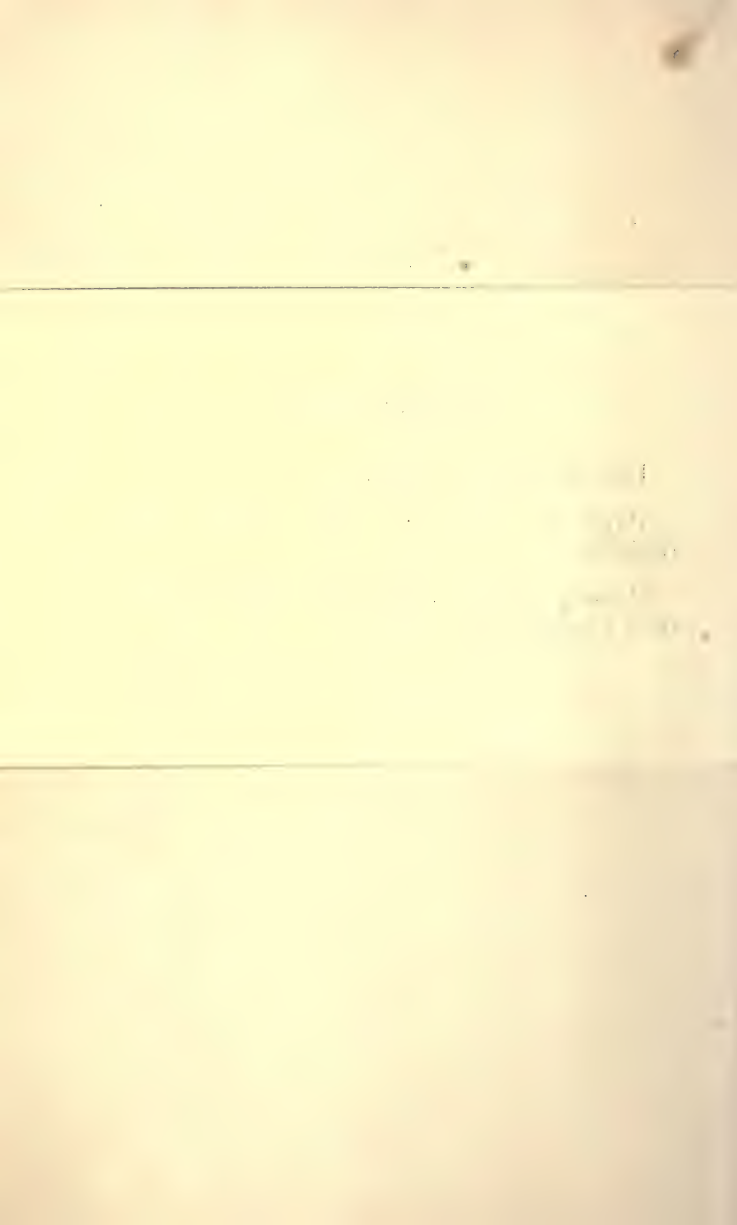
ERRATA.

For *Poinz*, read *Poynz*.

Page xix, line 8. For *reform*, read *re-form*.

Page 72, lines 3 and 26. For *Costanza*, read *Constanza*.

known to many in the English "Lives" which have already appeared, but they will bear repetition, and can hardly fail to edify and interest those who will read them as they are set forth in the following pages. The story of Mary Ward is really a fascinating one : and in its completeness and pathos it almost possesses the characteristics of a Greek tragedy, as it unfolds the earnest purpose, the life-long labours, the constant journeying, the perpetual perils, the seeming



Introduction.

THE publication of this short LIFE OF MARY WARD is singularly opportune. Quite recently, by a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, Our Holy Father Pope Pius X has permitted the nuns of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who are to be found in all parts of the world, once again to acclaim Mary Ward as their Foundress, which they have not been permitted to do for the past hundred and sixty years.

The "Life" of this devout and heroic lady, here told in a simple brief narrative, needs no preface or introduction. The facts are already known to many in the English "Lives" which have already appeared, but they will bear repetition, and can hardly fail to edify and interest those who will read them as they are set forth in the following pages. The story of Mary Ward is really a fascinating one : and in its completeness and pathos it almost possesses the characteristics of a Greek tragedy, as it unfolds the earnest purpose, the life-long labours, the constant journeying, the perpetual perils, the seeming

success and then the apparent overthrow of all the designs of an heroic and single-minded English lady of the seventeenth century.

Born in Yorkshire of a good family in the year 1585, early in life she recognised a call from God to establish some kind of a congregation of religious women with the special object of helping young Catholic English ladies in the days when they were suffering so bitterly under the penal laws. The lines of her Institute as she conceived it have since become familiar to us in the modern religious congregations, but in the early seventeenth century they were quite unknown in the Church. She was, in reality, the first to recognise the need of having nuns actively engaged in the many external works of Christian charity, which the Church encouraged, and which could be done better by those who had devoted their lives to God in religion than by paid labourers living in the world. She recognised that it was possible to unite the active ministrations of Martha with the inner life of Mary, and to spiritualize the external labours of charity by methods borrowed from the cloister.

At the time when Mary Ward experienced God's call the religious life in England had become impossible owing to the rigorous persecution of the Catholic faith, and she began to carry out her idea by establishing a house on the

continent. At first she succeeded beyond her expectation, and though the Institute had to encounter difficulties, it grew and prospered for some years, and obtained the support of many generous benefactors, clerical as well as lay. At the moment, however, when she might have reasonably expected to witness the consolidation of her work, partly through a mistake in the nature of the original organisation, coupled perhaps with a misunderstanding of her ecclesiastical position, and partly through a determined opposition to her scheme on the part of many who regarded it as an undesirable novelty in the traditional methods of religious life, the Institute, as first conceived by her, was suppressed by Pope Urban VIII in 1631.

The reasons for this suppression are clearly set forth in the Bull *Pastoralis Romani Pontificis*. They are substantially the following: Mary Ward had neither sought for nor obtained any approbation from the supreme authority of the Church for this new method of religious life, an oversight on her part, if this were really so, which could hardly fail to be fatal to her scheme, once this defect had been remarked upon by those that disapproved of it. Then, as General Superioress, the Pope considered that she had been receiving the solemn vows of religion without any ecclesiastical faculty, which was clearly against

the canon law and the constant practice of the Church. And finally she had with good reason determined that it was necessary for her nuns to be not subject to strict enclosure, which the Council of Trent had considered it necessary to impose upon all convents of religious women, and which relaxation had been the cause of grave scandal to many. After long delays and with much consideration, therefore, the Pope declared the suppression of the Institute conceived upon these lines and declared the vows taken under these conditions null and void. One clause, however, of this celebrated Bull seems to suggest a way for reorganising this Institute on lines which, whilst they would equally well carry out the designs of Mary Ward, would be conformable to the existing law; and in fact these were the principles adopted by the Foundress and some of her companions almost immediately in the reconstruction of the Congregation. This suggestion of the Pope is that if any of the nuns of the suppressed Institute desire to live as *quasi* religious, apart, however, from any who may cling to the condemned method of life, and provided they avoid everything that has been censured, "they may do so, under obedience to the Ordinary," and "in simple vows."

It is undoubtedly difficult to understand the full grounds of this condemnation by Pope Urban

VIII, but fortunately there is no necessity to discuss this matter. What, however, is certain is, that Mary Ward's project was known in Rome, and had been fully and openly laid before the Holy See. The special consideration and judgment of the Pope had been more than once sought upon the entire scheme. Thus, as early as 1616, a petition for examination and approbation was addressed to Pope Paul V, which gave a detailed plan of life proposed by Mary for her Institute, and which certainly amongst other things states her desire that the religious of the congregation should be bound only by simple vows. This petition was carried to Rome by Mr. Thomas Sackville, the faithful friend of the Institute, and was earnestly recommended by the bishop of St. Omer. Pope Paul V placed the matter in the hands of the Cardinals of the Congregation of the Council, and by April 10th, 1616, the Bishop received a reply from Cardinal Lancelotti, in the course of which his Eminence says : "The most illustrious Fathers, considering their (*i.e.*, the sisters') request most just, have commanded these letters to be addressed . . . that you would be pleased to undertake the chief care and protection of the same nuns . . . and if, as we trust, it shall so happen, the Apostolic See will also deliberate about confirming the Institute, and . . . if you will afford (the

help) we have above suggested, you will not only do a thing most pleasing to the Sacred Congregation, but also to our most holy Lord." It is thus abundantly clear that the project was before the Holy See from the first. Moreover, the whole was known in Rome and was formally placed by the Foundress before Pope Gregory XV in 1622.

The lines of religious life indicated in the Bull of Urban VIII are now well known to us, and are precisely those which form the basis of the congregational system followed by modern active Orders. In the time of Pope Urban VIII this was of course unknown in the Church, but in the last three centuries it has been copied by the numberless bodies which are doing such excellent work for God and the Church. To many, if not most people, who were not so convinced of God's call as Mary Ward was, the suppression of all hopes would have meant the end of active work of all kinds. To Mary, who undoubtedly possessed the spirit of the strong and valiant woman, it merely meant an opportunity for the exercise of entire and almost heroic obedience to the supreme authority of the Pope and the strengthening of her purpose to establish the Institute on methods which could be approved. She at once reorganised her Institute on these lines. Many of her first companions followed her, but others

obviously left and availed themselves of the freedom granted by the Act of Suppression. Others again, who desired to cling to the solemnity of the religious vows, no doubt joined other Orders in the way pointed out by the Bull of Pope Urban VIII. But Mary Ward, in spite of many discouragements and difficulties, began almost at once in Rome itself to reform her Institute. In this she was helped and encouraged by the same Pope who had decreed the dissolution of her first congregation, and the newly constituted Institute, in which whatever had been condemned in the first foundation was changed and corrected, from that time to this has grown and prospered, and as our Holy Father says in his recent Decree, it is to this Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary thus securely established by Mary Ward that "the Christian life is so greatly indebted."

All this success, however, has not been achieved without difficulty and peril. Even by the close of the seventeenth century and in fact in the last year of the century, the special difficulties through which the Institute had passed and the main object of the Bull of Suppression seems to have been almost forgotten. A letter exists which was written on October 20th, 1699, by Mary Portington, the oldest surviving religious of the Institute, and whose recollection went back

to the days of the Foundress herself, and which is of interest for more than one reason. It was written at the instance of Cardinal de Noailles to the Superioress of Mindelheim to beg her to be careful not to try and go back upon the terms of the Bull of Suppression by constituting herself a General Superior with powers condemned by Urban VIII. In this the writer declares that their "incomparable Foundress from the issue of the Bull desired that she should always be known not as Superioress but only as Mother. Further, that when about to die she appointed another in her place, who ruled not as Superioress but as Mother. This was Barbara Babthorp, then living at Rome. And she, Barbara Babthorp, after holding the office of Mother for some time, died and was succeeded by Mary Poyntz. These all acted in these matters as they had learned from the Foundress (Mary Ward) herself: that is to say, that by the force of the Bull it was not lawful to do anything else. And this Mary Poyntz, when she too was on the point of departing from this life, being asked by some to appoint someone as a Superioress replied 'God forbid that I should do what is forbidden by the Supreme Pontiff,' and," adds the writer, "I can testify to this for I was present."

The interest of this document is mainly the proof it affords that in the opinion of the early

religious of the Institute Mary Ward was unquestionably regarded as their Foundress, and that she and her successors were conscientiously carrying out the Bull of Suppression in the newly organised Society. The fact that Mary Ward was regarded as the Foundress is of importance in view of the circumstances of the Bull of Pope Benedict XIV, which was issued about fifty years after the date of the letter above mentioned. Before this date, however, the solemn approval of the Rules of the Institute had been obtained from Pope Clement XI, who on June 13th, 1703, issued a Brief to that effect. Although no mention is made of Mary Ward in this document, reference is made to the circumstances under which the Institute took its origin, which leave no doubt that it was the body she founded which was thus approved. It may be worth while to quote a passage from the preamble of this pontifical document. "It has lately," says Pope Clement XI, "been brought to our knowledge by our beloved son, the most noble Maximilian Emanuel, Duke of Bavaria and Prince Elector of the Holy Roman Empire, that certain Catholic ladies, noble English-women, exiles from their country, whence they had been banished in hatred of the Catholic faith, which is there suffering persecution. They met not only with a cordial reception from Maximilian of happy

memory, grandfather to the aforesaid Maximilian Emanuel, also in his day Duke of Bavaria and Prince Elector of the Holy Roman Empire, but also by his kind and generous help were enabled to set up a house or convent in his dominions. Here they have lived, and from time to time have been joined by other ladies up to the present day. They have always lived in common, and so continue to live under the authority of the Ordinary, and for the greater sanctification of their souls vow chastity, poverty and obedience, whilst as an exercise of charity towards their neighbour they devote themselves to the training, instruction and education of young girls."

After this approval of its rules the Institute continued to flourish and increase in numbers and to multiply its good works, and to venerate, it may be perhaps allowed, with an excess of zeal and affection, the name of its Foundress, Mary Ward.

About the year 1747, however, difficulties, into the nature of which it is not necessary here to enter, arose between the Bishop of Augsburg and the Superiors of the Institute. The solution was referred to the Holy See, and in the course of the discussion before the Sacred Congregation, the religious appeared to plead that their Institute had been founded by Mary Ward, and that it

had never been condemned or suppressed; whilst on the other hand the Bishop sought to show that they had been indeed instituted by Mary Ward, but that they had been suppressed entirely and completely by Pope Urban VIII. In defiance of this suppression, he contended, these religious had impudently continued to live together, and he begged the Holy See to declare that the Institute had never been approved, or the Bull of Suppression abrogated in any way, and that further, that by the approval of the rules in 1703, Pope Clement XI had in no way given even a tacit approval to the revocation of the sentence of Pope Urban VIII.

At the time when these difficulties come up for the decision of the supreme authority of the Holy See, the reigning pontiff was Benedict XIV, the greatest canonist who ever sat upon the papal throne. He was confronted by a serious difficulty in deciding the matters at issue, and the Bull *Quamvis justo* of 30th April, 1749, which records his judgment, is of the highest importance, and manifests his prudence and clear-sightedness. To save the Institute the Pope declared that as it then existed it was not the same as that which had been suppressed by Pope Urban VIII. This, as we have seen, is historically correct in the truest sense, since Mary Ward, submitting to the condemnation at once, re-constituted the

congregation on an approved basis. Seeing, however, that the root of the misunderstandings and difficulties lay in the fact that Mary Ward, having been the Foundress of the two forms of the Institute, the distinction between the two had been over-looked both by the Bishop of Augsburg and by the religious themselves, the Pope in his far-sighted wisdom approved of the judgment of a particular congregation of Bishops and Regulars held on 21st of June, 1748, to the effect that Mary Ward was not to be called by the name of Foundress. It is, however, impossible to study this Bull of Benedict XIV without seeing that in this the Pope was not stating an historical fact, but issuing a prohibition for motives of prudence. He desired to protect the nuns of the Institute from the demand of the Bishop, that since it claimed Mary Ward as Foundress, and since the body so founded had been condemned and suppressed, it should be declared that it had no authorised existence, and must cease to exist. The Pope solved the difficulty by directing the religious not to call Mary Ward their Foundress, and by declaring that the Institute, as then existing, was not that which had been suppressed.

The motives of prudence and utility which led to this have long ceased to have any weight, and hence on April 6th, 1909, His Holiness Pius X

thought fit to remove this prohibition, and once more to allow the religious of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary to call Mary Ward their Foundress.

F. A. GASQUET.



Life of Mary Ward.

CHAPTER I.

MARY WARD was born on January 23rd, 1585, at Mullwith, in the county of York. Both her father, Marmaduke Ward of Newby, and her mother, Ursula Wright, were related to more than one of those noble families in the county which, under the fiercest persecutions, had steadfastly adhered to the Catholic faith.

In England, pride of race and respect for authority are very deeply rooted. Traditions of feudal days, they still linger in the land ; and among the older families especially they live and flourish. Many such there are, who trace their line back to the Conquest, or even further, and are masters still of the domains from which their ancestors in the thirteenth century set out to take part in the Crusades. And the ancient name which long ago rallied their followers on the battle-fields of Palestine is more to them, and a source of greater pride, than any patent of nobility. With all

their enterprise, the English, more than any other nation, have retained through social and political revolutions the customs and the spirit of those who went before them, and are more faithful to the traditions and memories of the past.

The families of Mary Ward's parents were each an example of the kind just mentioned. That of her father was of Saxon origin, established in the county of York before the Norman Conquest. Her mother belonged to one no less ancient ; and each was distinguished even more for its attachment to the true faith than for its honoured name.

When the child, whose story we are relating, first saw the light, her parents, known for their devotion to the Holy See, were leading an isolated and hidden life on their estate of Mullwith, near the town of Ripon, seeking thus to escape in some degree the vexations that the followers of the true faith had to bear.

For at that time the Catholics of the county of York were oppressed by the government of Lord Huntingdon, President of the North ; and Mary was scarcely a year old when the gates of the York prisons were flung open to receive

women of every age and condition. The child's grandmother, with other heroic confessors of the faith, was already there, and when, after fourteen years' imprisonment, she was allowed to return to her family, she carried away with her a tender charity for those whose sufferings she had shared. Her little grand-daughter, not yet five years old, was entrusted to her care, and from her received many a lesson of true fraternal charity, learning when quite a child to sacrifice money and pleasures in order to help Catholics who were oppressed. We read that one day she gave up for their sake some pet chickens she had reared and, child-like, dearly loved.

The years spent at Ploughland, in the company of her saintly grandmother, left a deep impression on her mind and bore abundant fruit in after life. For five full years Mary had the inestimable advantage of being educated in the school of heroism by one who had herself nobly professed the faith throughout a long imprisonment; and with this example of constancy before her eyes, she learnt to despise earthly goods, liberty, riches, life itself. Whilst the soul of the child was thus trained to detachment from worldly enjoyments, her mind was being

opened by the study of letters, and she acquired enough Latin to be able later on to read the works of the Fathers of the Western Church in the original. In 1595 Mary returned to her family, where two brothers and three sisters awaited her: John, George, Barbara, Teresa, and Elisabeth, all noble and chosen souls, who, with the exception of one, as it would appear, afterwards dedicated themselves to the service of God in the religious state. George entered the Society of Jesus; Barbara, associating herself with her sister Mary, became her inseparable companion and a most valuable support in her work; Teresa, while quite young, joined the Carmelites and founded a house of the Order in Poland; of Elisabeth but scanty details have been recorded, but they are enough to show that she also chose the better part.

Among the old Catholic families whose faith was being continually strengthened by contact with persecution, religious vocations were very numerous. Catholics of those days grew up and were educated under the shadow of the Cross. Their youth—for others the time of illusions and golden dreams—was spent amid changing fortunes and cruel

wrongs; and they were generous and prompt in obeying God's call to relinquish a world whose weakness and deceit they had early learnt to despise.

In the seclusion of her home Mary very soon showed signs of a most precocious piety and a great devotion to Our Blessed Lady. Already, when not yet able to walk alone, she had been preserved from the effects of a serious fall by the power of the Holy Name of Jesus which her mother had invoked; and this same Holy Name was the child's first word. She experienced intense joy when at her Confirmation the name of Mary was added to that of Jane, which she had received at Baptism, and while still a child under her father's roof she had occasion to show her great faith in the protection of Our Blessed Lady, remaining quietly on her knees reciting the rosary whilst the house was in flames. From her tenderest years the wonderful child gave marks of an earnest spirit of penance and prayer, and the courage with which she openly professed the Catholic faith was extraordinary. Indeed, the energy and fortitude of martyrs dwelt in a delicate child scarcely ten years old. Together with virtues such as these, Mary Ward was endowed with

natural gifts of a high order. A dignified, beautiful exterior, added to a lively and acute intelligence and a charming and gentle manner, flattered the pride of her father and won the love and admiration of all alike. When about twelve years of age, her hand had been already asked twice in marriage, according to the customs of those days when long engagements were the rule. But it had been sought in vain, for Mary already cherished in her heart the design of consecrating herself to the love and service of God. In the meantime, terrible days were at hand for the Catholics. From 1596—1598 the prisons of York found innumerable victims, and many martyrs suffered there for the faith. Marked out by the hatred of Protestants, Mary's father resolved to take refuge with his family in Northumberland, where Catholics then enjoyed comparative peace. But fearing the severity of the climate for his little daughter, he took her to a relation of his, Lady Ardington. This lady, who had undergone imprisonment for the faith in York, was well fitted by her evident piety to develop in the child the pious impressions of early years. Mary employed the time between the feast of Our Lady's Assumption and her

Nativity in 1598 in preparing, with the fervour of an angel, for her first Holy Communion. After having sanctified Lady Ardington's home at Harewell by her innocence and virtue, she was sent to live with Sir Ralph Babthorpe and his wife, a cousin of her mother's. The castle in which they lived might almost have been a religious house, so great were the regularity and fervour of its inmates. Many a priest found a refuge there; masters and servants alike assisted daily at Mass and Vespers, and prayed in common; and, living under the continual threat of molestation on account of their faith, sought to strengthen it by recollection and exercises of devotion day by day.

Moreover, they had an admirable example of fidelity in the mistress of the house, Lady Grace Babthorpe, who, having been brought before the Council a few years previously and asked how many Masses she had heard, answered with noble courage that she had heard so many that she could not count them. Irritated by this answer, the President committed her to prison, where, in a long and close confinement, she had paid the price of her intrepidity.

Mary was at this time fifteen years old, and it is needless to say how great and beneficial was the influence upon her of this courageous soul who for the time took the place of a mother towards her. Under this hospitable roof Mary tasted the pure and holy joys of a friendship which united her to Barbara, the youngest daughter of Lady Babthorpe. Her gentle, merry, upright and affectionate character made Mary the favourite of all, especially of her saintly cousin. Docile to the Divine voice which was calling her to a more perfect life, she set herself with all the energy of her nature to conquer her defects, and being sensitive beyond measure, she sought every occasion to humble herself before every one. God blessed her generous efforts, infusing into her soul a sweet and joyful serenity which became natural to her, and never left her throughout her life, even under the most trying circumstances.

In the meantime, the attraction she had felt for the religious life increased, and became stronger every day. But the times were such that she was deprived of the spiritual helps which would have guided her to a definite step, and Mary was compelled

to examine her vocation with God alone. It was a painful and arduous task, as in England the convents had all been suppressed, and whoever desired to serve God in the cloister was necessarily obliged to leave home and country. Still, at intervals, God sent timely help in the person of some worthy priest to the forlorn soul in search of a guide; among them Father Mush, a truly holy man, who inspired her with a burning desire of following in the footsteps of the martyrs, the tale of whose sufferings she drank in with all the eagerness of a heart filled with the love of God. She remembered that a relation of hers, the Ven. Francis Ingleby, had crowned his apostolic labours with a most glorious martyrdom, and she wished that, like so many disciples of Christ, she might shed her blood for her faith and be found worthy of dying for His sake.

But amid these heroic aspirations God deigned to show her, and she understood, that her martyrdom was to be of quite another nature. She felt she was called to a slow and lingering death, to a protracted and hidden sacrifice, to some unknown pain and toil to be borne alone and unsuspected of other men.

10 Life of Mary Ward

From her early youth she had been accustomed to receive from God during prayer intimate revelations and inspirations which had become her rule of life, and correspondence with this grace was that which lay nearest to her heart. God, on His part, was dealing with her as is His wont with chosen souls, submitting her to those delicate and painful trials which He reserves for those hearts which enter deeply into the participation of His sorrows, leaving her in darkness amid false accusations, misunderstanding, and contradiction ; allowing her to bear harsh, malignant judgments, yet always upholding her with a lively feeling of love and trust in Him to Whom she had consecrated herself, and Whose adorable Will was the constant guide of all her actions. An unbounded confidence in God, her strength and her joy, together with a great simplicity, were at once the characteristics of her moral conduct and the secret of her attractiveness. Herself strong, and a lover of perfection and penance, Mary knew, nevertheless, how to make herself all things to all men, and draw souls to God, the centre of her own affections.

Her father, while not ignorant of her holy aspirations, knew full well this power of

attraction, and tried to persuade Mary that she would be much more useful in the world than in the cloister. He was already contemplating for her a union with Edmund Neville, heir to large estates in the county of Westmoreland, and justified his opposition to her religious calling by pointing out the influence which Mary might one day be called upon to exercise in protecting her brethren in the faith, who had in Edmund Neville a powerful defender. But Mary's thoughts and desires were of too spiritual an order to allow of her yielding now to mere earthly considerations; and her father, hesitating and perplexed, but not convinced, decided to take her to London in order to obtain the opinion of a Jesuit of great virtue, Fr. Richard Holtby.* The latter, at first, seemed to share the views of Mary's father; she, however, remained constant in her resolve to follow God's call, and entrusting her future to His divine guidance, prayed without ceasing, till at length He Who, as the Psalmist tells us, "gives meat in due season," so disposed that the wished-for light should shine upon

* Richard Holtby, born in Yorkshire, entered the Society in 1583, and died in 1640, after having led the life of a missionary in England for fifty years. He was notable for his great wisdom and tried virtue.

her much-tried soul. One day Fr. Holtby, whilst offering the holy sacrifice in the presence of his penitent, received so clear a revelation as to her calling that, under the emotion caused by the light he had just received, he said to her : " I put no obstacle any longer to your designs ; on the contrary, I shall help you with all my power to follow them." The authoritative words of the holy priest put an end to the opposition of Mary's father ; moreover, Edmund Neville soon recognised in the ruin of his human hopes God's voice urging him to a life of perfection ; he became a priest and a Jesuit, and having laboured for forty years for the salvation of souls in England, fell a victim to the hardships of imprisonment, and died, advanced in years, an heroic confessor of the faith. After having gained this new victory, Mary set herself to find, out of England, a religious house which could receive her. God had inspired her with an ardent longing for perfection and excited in her an ever-increasing desire of consecrating herself to Him in the most austere Order where the greatest abnegation could be practised ; but He had not given her an attraction to one more than to another. She resolved therefore to go to

St. Omer, in Flanders, at that time under the Catholic rule of Albert and Isabella. There, where a colony of English Catholics had gathered round the celebrated Jesuit college, she would examine at leisure the various religious Orders and make her choice. But it was no easy undertaking to leave England in those days. The captains of ships which conveyed Catholic women and children out of the realm ran the risk of having their vessels confiscated, and at the time when Mary sought to leave England a most severe system of inspection of outgoing boats was in force. She therefore had to wait a while for a favourable opportunity, but finally sailed under the protection of a certain Catherine Bentley, who seems to have frequently discharged a like office for young girls travelling to Belgium or Flanders at this time. In the few notes which Mary wrote in obedience to Superiors, she tells us how the great interior joy she had experienced until then was changed on her departure into the deepest agony. "I became surrounded with darkness," she says, "and I anxiously asked myself into what religious Order I was to enter. In this state of mind I crossed the sea and reached St. Omer."

Then ensued a series of painful struggles between nature and grace in this generous soul in which the hardest conflicts with human affection had one after another to be fought. The thought of abandoning parents, brothers and sisters, the friends of her early years, together with the knowledge she had that those dear to her lived in constant danger of death, tore her affectionate heart and made the thought of cutting herself off for ever from all she had loved and cherished, unspeakably bitter.

Nevertheless, she was soon captivated by the charm of St. Omer with its famous Abbey of St. Bertin, its shrine of Our Lady of Miracles, and its numerous monasteries. Accustomed to see exterior worship proscribed, Mary found here a novel atmosphere of religion, and for the first time breathed freely the vivifying air of Catholic life.

CHAPTER II.

IN those days, as we have already said, St. Omer belonged to the Netherlands which, since 1598, had been wisely governed by the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia,* daughter of Philip II of Spain. A large number of English Catholics had settled there, attracted—especially the young men—by the well deserved fame of the Jesuit college. Mary was expected, as many letters from England had preceded her, announcing her arrival. Her desire of becoming a religious, her doubts as to the Order she was to enter, her sterling qualities and solid virtues, were known to many, and the Poor Clares or Colletines established in St. Omer entertained the hope of acquiring such a gifted and virtuous subject for their Institute. But the haven of religious life was not to be reached except after long and hard trials. God's designs are different for each one, and to some He gives from the very beginning

* Isabella Clara Eugenia, eldest daughter of Philip II. She married her cousin, the Archduke Albert of Austria, and received as her marriage dower the Low Countries which she governed with gentleness and prudence.

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abundance of light to follow the path assigned them, whilst others have to wait for the light and seek it through long delays, darkness and mental suffering. Mary Ward was of these latter sorely tried souls. God permitted that the first confessor to whom she turned should fail to discern his penitent's real calling, and he urged her to enter the convent of the Poor Clares. Docile and faithful to the voice of her confessor, Mary followed with humility the advice she had received and prepared herself with all the fervour of her nature to fulfil the new duties imposed upon her. In receiving Mary into the convent, the Abbess seems to have consulted more the immediate interests of the Community than the mental endowments and early education of the new postulant and, strange to say, she was enrolled as an out-sister.

The astonished and admiring inhabitants of St. Omer saw this noble and delicate girl going her rounds, a basket on her arm, and begging from door to door the daily bread of her poor and numerous community, exposed to scoffs and contempt, which indeed she often received instead of the alms she asked. Her friends and relatives showed their disapprobation at seeing Mary engaged in

occupations so little congenial to her, and she herself felt in her innermost soul that she was not in the road God wished her to follow. This life of ceaseless outdoor work and purely exterior occupation deprived her completely of the quiet, recollected convent existence for which she had longed, and for which she had given up all she most loved and cherished in this world.

For a whole year she persevered, but at last her Superiors recognised that their exemplary postulant was not in her true vocation. Mary herself relates in her notes how, in the midst of this trial, she received, as it were, a ray of light which dispersed the clouds which surrounded her.

It was on March 12th, 1607, the Feast of St. Gregory the Great, who on earth had so much loved and helped the English. Mary was invoking his efficacious protection in her difficulties, when suddenly she felt herself seized with an ardent desire of doing some work for England. But this inspiration was not well defined, and Mary continued to pray that God's holy Will might be made clear to her, and immediately she conceived the idea of founding a convent of Poor Clares for English girls. By a providential coincidence

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in which we are allowed to see the special love of which she was the object, the Rev. Fr. Soto, Commissary-General of the Franciscans, visiting the convent, called Mary to him, and before she had spoken, said to her : “ My daughter, this life is not for you ; choose another way, and I shall help you to the best of my power.” Mary Ward received these words as from God, left the Poor Clares, and consecrated herself with zeal to the new work for which there was pressing need, as the vocations from England were continually increasing. Persecution itself impelled souls towards higher things, and every day saw some young girl knocking at the door of a convent, either in France or in Belgium. But experience had proved (and the memoirs of the times confirm it) that in spite of uniformity of life and the ties of fraternal charity which united them with the inmates of the Flemish religious houses, the English members found it difficult to adapt themselves to the difference of habits, customs, food, and temperament. The foundation of convents for religious of British nationality had therefore become almost a necessity.

Lady Percy, daughter of Blessed Thomas Percy, Duke of Northumberland, had already

established a convent of English Benedictines in Brussels. Under similar circumstances, Mary felt herself inspired to open a house for those who desired to follow the rule of the Saint of Assisi. The work was not without its difficulties. The young foundress was only twenty-two years old, a stranger in a foreign land, having no other prestige than that given her by her holiness and the irresistible charm of her person, of which her contemporaries never tire of telling. In spite of everything, and with the simplicity and boldness which so often characterised her conduct in after life, after having secured the approval of the Bishop, the help of the Jesuits, and the protection of the reigning Archdukes, she presented herself at the Court, as she wanted to treat of the matter personally with their Highnesses.

Isabella, intelligent and pious ruler that she was, soon loved and understood Mary, and with her concurrence the foundation of the English Poor Clares was first established at St. Omer under the direction of Fr. Roger Lee, and then permanently transferred to Gravelines in 1609, in a house purchased with Mary's dowry. This house became a home of virtues and holiness. The institute

spread to Aire, Rouen, and Dunkerque, and eventually the members of these four communities took refuge in Darlington when the horrors of the French Revolution drove them out of France. Thus the existing convent of Poor Clares in Darlington represents Mary Ward's foundation.

Mary's work having opened the door to so many souls thirsting for a life of sacrifice, it would seem natural, according to all human prevision, that now she herself should have the peace of mind, the interior repose she had sought, and find rest in the consciousness that she was at last in the path she was to pursue. But God's ways are inscrutable and His dealings with His creatures often at variance with our short-sighted views. Mary was not to be a Poor Clare, and in the complete obscurity of her soul as to her future she passed through a period of no small doubt, hesitation, and anxious uncertainty. It is true she had enjoyed a few months of tranquillity of mind in the midst of the thirteen daughters of St. Clare, who were indebted to her zeal and generosity for the happy religious home they now possessed. But on the 2nd of May a sudden and strong conviction took hold of her that, to use her own words: "I

was not to be of the Order of St. Clare but something else. What it was to be, I did not see nor could imagine except that it was a good thing and what God willed." She had been an instrument in God's hands to help her sisters in the faith, and now that her work was accomplished, He showed her that His designs over her were not such as those who judge of things only by the exterior were led to believe.

Mary relates what occurred on this occasion as follows: "Having passed four or five months in this place and at these exercises, and enjoying great peace of mind and interior consolation, I was sitting at work among the other nuns on the day of St. Athanasius, the second of May, about ten o'clock in the forenoon, being employed in making certain cords of St. Francis for the use of the religious, and reciting privately, as I was accustomed to do at each one that I made, the Litanies of our most Blessed Lady, that whoever should wear that cord might never commit mortal sin, when there happened to me a thing of such a nature, that I know not, and never did know, how to explain. It appeared wholly Divine, and came with such force that it annihilated and reduced me to

nothing ; my strength was extinguished, and there was no other operation in me but that which God caused ; to see intellectually what was to be fulfilled in me, I willing or not willing, was all that remained to me. The suffering was great, because the violence was so far beyond my powers, and the consolation was greater to see that God willed to make use of me in what pleased Him best. . . . What I say is far too disproportionate to what passed on this occasion, and in no way to my satisfaction, no will it be to those who read it ; may God supply what is wanting as far as it will be to His service."

As was the rule with her, Mary at once communicated what was passing in her soul to her Superiors, and, as we may well believe, she met with general disapprobation, and the only assurance she received from Fr. Roger Lee, her confessor, was to the effect that she could save her soul whether she remained or left. Mary, tired and discouraged, a prey to the deepest grief, shed bitter tears at the thought that she was not destined for the Order.

Meanwhile the Superior of the convent advised her to practise the most rigorous mortifications to overcome what she con-

sidered to be a temptation. Mary thus accused of inconsistency, of being deceived by the suggestions of the evil one, prayed earnestly and practised corporal penance, in order to obtain light from above, that, it was remarked, "she had become like a living skeleton." All seemed useless. The more Mary prayed and fought against this interior voice, which was calling her elsewhere, the clearer and more forcibly did it repeat to her that henceforth she was to devote herself to the salvation of souls in England as far as in her lay; but under another rule and in another field of labour. She at last yielded to the divine inspiration, and, with the leave of her confessor, made a vow of chastity and resolved to return to England in order to fulfil God's holy will in her regard.

CHAPTER III.

It was not without the deepest sorrow that Mary left St. Omer in the spring of 1609. Those only who have seen their dearest hopes and long-cherished plans, conceived in the pure light of the sanctuary, fail, can understand what Mary's feelings must have been when she saw that God mysteriously permitted her endeavours apparently to come to nought. One day she was to recognise how, through this total annihilation of her will, the divine Master had opened to her a treasure of knowledge concerning the religious life, and of men and things; a knowledge not only precious but indispensable to the future foundress of a new congregation.

We have but scanty particulars of Mary's first stay in London after her arrival in England. The perils of the times required the exercise of the greatest prudence on the part of Catholics and a reserve in their correspondence that is most discouraging to the historian. Everything was shrouded with the veil of secrecy and mystery in order to escape discovery. Such

discretion was absolutely necessary if we remember the terrible penalties that hung over the heads of those who were determined to preserve at all costs, for themselves and those dear to them, the sacred deposit of the faith.

We know, however, in spite of the reticence of her biographers, that our heroine settled in a modest apartment in the Strand, and there began her apostolate among her suffering and persecuted brethren in the faith. She exercised a great influence over all who approached her, owing to her gentle and winning ways; but more so by her ardent zeal, modesty, and her most exemplary conduct. Indulgent to others, she was most severe to herself and, dressed as a lady of the world, wore a rough haircloth, the points of which penetrated into her flesh. "God," says Winefrid Wigmore, her faithful biographer, "gave her wonderful power over evil." She relates that one day a Protestant lady, an obstinate heretic, was dangerously ill. The efforts of some Catholic friends to bring her to better feelings and thus prepare herself for the last great journey, had been fruitless. Mary, who chanced to be in the neighbourhood, hearing of the sad case, made

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up her mind to visit her, and spoke to the patient with her accustomed sweetness, laying her hand upon her head. All at once, to the astonishment of those present, the Protestant lady cried out : “ I wish to become a Roman Catholic, I wish to go to confession.” A priest was called in haste, to whom she made the confession of her sins with a clearness, a fervour and a contrition which edified the confessor. God visibly blessed the zealous efforts of his faithful servant. The conversion of two Calvinist ministers, the help she gave to several young girls to enable them to enter convents in Flanders, the courage with which she visited those imprisoned for the faith, the holy zeal which suggested to her to disguise herself in a servant’s dress in order to reach a relation of hers whom she had the consolation of converting—all these things witness to the fortitude, the undaunted courage, unshaken faith and trust in God of this saintly heroine. To use the words of one of the numerous writers of her life, “ she worked day and night to bring back lost souls.”

If the sojourn of Mary in England proved beneficial to a great number of souls, it also enlightened her own mind as to the exact

object of the work to which she was eventually wholly to consecrate herself. This work, we know, had the welfare of the English Catholics for its immediate object. Living in their midst, she became acquainted with their perils and temptations. She saw in particular how difficult it was for them to provide for the education of their daughters. Watched and hunted, as they were, without respite, the departure of their children for the Continent met with obstacles of all kinds; while, on the other hand, it was much more dangerous for those young souls to remain with their families, from which the mother might at any moment be carried away and put in prison. To live safely in such an atmosphere a solid religious education was needed, and Mary, with a sort of divine intuition, perceived that she could not serve the Catholic cause better than by training a generation of strong Christian women, capable of a fidelity which would withstand every test.

Thus the outlines of Mary's real vocation were beginning to shape themselves, and Providence, to help her in this great work, was putting in her path souls animated with the same aspirations, and anxious to devote

themselves to the welfare of religion and the good of their country. In fact, already during her stay in England in 1609, she found the first coadjutors for her future work, those faithful, earnest, noble, courageous companions who, under her leadership, founded the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The reader should now become acquainted with the seven young maidens who grouped themselves round Mary Ward, all of whom, in spite of their youth, were souls of tried virtue and genuine piety, animated with a holy zeal for the glory of God. Among them, the name of Mary Pointz merits the first mention. She belonged to the ancient family of that name, and was gifted with all that is most highly esteemed in person, fortune and intellectual endowments. Although scarcely sixteen years old, she had already been asked in marriage by the heir of an ancient and illustrious family. Having met with a peremptory refusal, the cavalier asked to be allowed at least to possess her portrait. Mary Pointz consented, but what was his consternation on receiving the much-desired picture ! One part of the face represented an excellent likeness of Mary : the other, a

death's head, and from the cheek down to the breast, the flesh was represented as quite corrupted.

This likeness made such an impression on the young man that he forsook the world and became a religious.*

Winefride Wigmore, another of her first companions, was nearly related to Mary Pointz, and was, perhaps, the one whom Mary Ward loved most. Her family had given heroic proofs of attachment to the faith; two of her uncles had been tortured rather than forsake it; another had died an exile in Rome in the odour of sanctity; five of her brothers and sisters had entered religion. She herself was so perfect that she had been from her earliest youth surnamed "the little saint," and in the history of Mary Ward, she remains the type of the most perfect abnegation and most courageous devotedness.

Susanna Rookwood, brought up in Coldham Castle, had been more than any of the others a sufferer from the hardships of those dark days. Her parents, in spite of enormous pecuniary losses through their fidelity to the

* This portrait is in the Convent of the Institute in Nymphenburg (Bavaria).

faith, had found means to make of the old manor a refuge for their persecuted brethren, and Susanna had drawn from this atmosphere of abnegation and sacrifice the heroic intrepidity of which she was to give more than one example in after life.

Like Susanna Rookwood, Barbara Babthorpe was distinguished as a child for a piety and intelligence beyond her years. It will be remembered that it was under the hospitable roof of her parents that Mary Ward spent a part of her girlhood, when Barbara was still a child.

Surrounded with examples of Christian heroism, she early gave signs of rare wisdom and exquisite tact, a noble mind and a firmness of character rare at her age. Her father, Sir Ralph Babthorpe, one of the wealthiest noblemen in Yorkshire, had lost everything for the faith, and died in the direst poverty. Her mother, after the saintly death of her husband, joined the Augustinian community at Louvain, and her two brothers became, one a Benedictine, the other a Jesuit. Barbara united with the hereditary courage of her race a rare talent for government and a persuasive and eloquent manner of speaking. In after years she became one

of the principal supports of the Institute formed by Mary Ward, who relied much upon her judgment and prudence.

We find another Barbara in the ranks of Mary's first companions. This was her own youngest sister. Less gifted, perhaps, than her namesake, Barbara Bathorpe, she still possessed the peculiar charm which adorns souls described in Holy Scripture as those who, "being made perfect in a short space, fulfil a long time." In many points she resembled her sister Mary. She was courageous and devoted, gentle and attractive. She gives a portrait of herself in the resolutions which were found among her papers after her death: "My looks shall be always pleasant, meek, modest, and grave, high in God, yet full of humility, not contemning anything, nor giving way to the least occasion wherein the Divine Majesty or others might be offended. My conversation shall be substantial, civil, sincere, and suitable to the parties' disposition with whom I speak. My countenance and exterior comportment of body shall be even, quiet, and decently ordered, such as may give all sorts of people, both secular and religious, friends and enemies, full satisfaction, and

myself remain immovable and retired in God."

Lastly, Johanna Brown, a near relative of Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria, and Catherine Smith complete the group of heroic, souls destined to build up a work against which no contrary current, however strong, no persecution, no opposition could prevail. We possess very few details concerning these ; we are told, however, that in the fervour of this spirit of sacrifice and devotedness they were not inferior to their sisters. The eldest of the little group was twenty-eight years old, and all, like Mary, had already passed through trials of no ordinary kind, and possessed wisdom and virtue far beyond their years. They were animated with the same desire of offering themselves up for God's glory and the good of their country, and were full of confidence in the one who had almost unconsciously drawn them to share her life and plans. She on her part gained new courage from their generous self-abnegation and trust.

With her usual frankness and simplicity, Mary confided to them the lights she had received from God, and her conviction of being called to found a congregation having

for its immediate scope the education of young English girls, though as yet she did not know what were to be the rules and name of the new religious company, but relied on Divine Providence to make them known to her. All were unanimous in assuring her of their resolve to cast in their lot with hers in order to accomplish God's work under her direction.

No atmosphere could be more suitable to the spiritual formation of the new recruits than one of peace and religious freedom, and therefore Mary Ward chose St. Omer as the cradle of the infant foundation. She knew and loved the old Flemish city. She counted many friends there, and nearness to England, for a work of this nature, was an essential condition of success. How did Mary and her companions manage to accomplish this short but most dangerous crossing and escape the vigilance of the officials of the English Government? Did they cross separately or together?

We do not know ; but whichever it may be, God, Who does not count obstacles, guided them safely across, and we find them all united in St. Omer at the end of 1609 in a house situated in the "Grosse rue," now

called "Rue Carnot." Although still without a fixed rule, they led from the very beginning a most austere life in order to draw down God's blessing on their work, destined, indeed, to be so great and so fruitful.

CHAPTER IV.

ST. OMER was at that time a most Catholic town, and our readers will easily understand the affectionate respect and cordiality bestowed on "the English Ladies," as Mary and her companions were called. They continued to be known by this name; and the kind of life they adopted from the very beginning became their rule for the future.

The pious Flemings instinctively felt themselves attracted towards the numerous English Catholics then residing in their capital, admiring their wonderful resignation and great fervour. Moreover, they had not forgotten Mary's stay with the Collettines, and the remembrance of the beautiful, modest young girl whom they had seen begging from door to door, for the wants of the community was still fresh in their memory. When the English Ladies opened their schools to the poor children of the town, their popularity was singularly increased. They had begun, according to Mary's first intention, by receiving a certain number of young English

girls, the parents of whom were anxious to keep them away from the troubled atmosphere of their country. But the number of the Sisters having considerably increased, Mary, full of gratitude for the visible blessing God was bestowing on her labours, wished to extend the benefit of the work to others besides her own compatriots. She therefore established free schools in which, according to the testimony of Jean Hendrico, a citizen of St. Omer, "their little girls were taught to write, read and sew for the honour of God." He speaks with admiration of these delicate women, preaching by the lives they led every kind of austerity and mortification. If the esteem and affection of the inhabitants of St. Omer were a consolation to the English Ladies, the benevolent protection of the Bishop was no less a precious encouragement and most valid support. He became a fast friend of the new Institute, and neither prejudice, ill-will, nor envious misrepresentation, or even the malicious accusations of which the English Ladies were before long to become the object, could even shake the conviction he had of Mary's holiness and innocence of life and that of her first companions. The Infanta Isabella likewise could

not fail to appreciate the advantages, both material and moral, that such a work would bring to the children who could avail themselves of it. Mary had, as we have seen, already experienced the good-will of the sovereign and, her foundation established, she hastened to inform her Majesty of it. The approval and sympathy of Isabella were such as to rouse the suspicions of the Ambassador of James I at the Court of Brussels. In 1613 he points her out to his government as a proof of the "favour which the discontented subjects of his Majesty enjoy here."

The little community had imposed severe penances upon themselves. They slept on the ground, ate only once a day, and took barely the necessary rest. In proportion to the increase of members, Mary's prayers were multiplied, and she studied carefully the different rules of the then existing congregations, without, however, feeling a special attraction to any one of them. The affectionate interest of her friends unconsciously added to her perplexities. Whilst admiring her enterprising spirit, they wondered at her not joining one of the approved Orders, and each one believed it to be his duty to suggest this or that rule in use in the Church.

But Mary, enlightened from above and convinced that Almighty God desired her to work for the salvation of her own country, was anxious to adopt the proper means to secure her end. Above all, she wanted her Sisters, while bound by vows and animated by the true religious spirit, to be free to dedicate themselves to those works of charity most useful to the English Catholics at the time, and especially in the matter of the education of girls.

The first serious impediments she met with were the papal enclosure then required for religious women and the obligation of wearing the religious habit, two things impossible where the penal laws were in full force. These were the source of untold difficulties and the great cause of the violent opposition which Mary Ward encountered on all sides. An innovation such as Mary contemplated was undoubtedly contrary to the legislation of the Church, opposed to tradition, to custom and experience, and seemed absolutely inadmissible for religious. The Council of Trent, to prevent abuses, had just imposed strict enclosure on all the Orders of women. St. Francis of Sales himself, in spite of the prestige of his great learning and

sanctity, had to abandon his first plan of founding an active order for his spiritual daughters. What was Mary's attitude in presence of these formidable and manifold obstacles? Did she yield to the advice of her well-wishers and sacrifice the principal end of her work? Full of that unbounded trust in Him who was guiding her, she prayed and prayed the more as the difficulties increased. She was not deceived in her expectations. The light asked for in humility came at last; and in the year 1611, one day in May, feeling a great peace of soul, she was inspired to adopt the rule of St. Ignatius for her congregation, as far as it could be practised by women. "This conviction," she wrote later, "brought her such strength and consolation that it was impossible for her to doubt it coming from Him whose words produce works."

From that moment her resolution was unshaken. In our days such congregations have grown to be innumerable, and the abundant fruits of sanctity they have borne and do not cease to bear, show with what divine intuition Mary was led to open a new field for the holy energies of so many, and to meet the pressing needs of our own genera-

tion. Following the interior voice, which asserted itself more and more, she took the lead in working for the new form of religious life which has become now so general. To use a common expression, she rowed against the stream, fighting bravely the strong current of opposition. In order to follow what she saw to be God's will, she sacrificed her whole self, her personal aspirations, her repose, her reputation, her entire life, and exposed herself to contradictions of all kinds, the criticism of friends and foes, and calumnies of a nature cruelly wounding to one who prized the gift of faith above all other things, and deemed it a happiness to shed the last drop of her blood in its defence. Mary's companions welcomed with joy a proposal which enabled them to unite the contemplative with the active life, and thus attend to their great work of the education of youth without, however, excluding other works of mercy which might seem necessary. But such were not the views of others who were following the development of Mary's plan. The thought of religious women going out freely to fulfil exterior acts of charity, frightened and even scandalised both the clergy and the faithful. The Jesuits

themselves, with Fr. Roger Lee* at their head, whom the Bishop had appointed as a wise director to the Sisters, received the news of Mary's intention with great reserve, in spite of the esteem they had for her. They feared lest their enemies would accuse them (as in fact they did) of wanting to affiliate the Institute of the English Ladies to the Society, an affiliation Mary never contemplated even for a moment. The adoption of the Rule of St. Ignatius was to her mind the best means to her end; but, at the same time, she wished to remain in the most complete independence with regard to the foundation and government of her Institute.

Bishop Blaise alone, superior to the prejudices of the times, highly approved of Mary's intentions. He could not help admiring the holiness of the young foundress, her uprightness of character and singleness of purpose, and he does not appear to have shared in the general fear of what was then considered to be a bold innovation. He even went farther, and in a pastoral letter did not hesitate to vindicate her and hers from the attacks of short-sighted people, who are so

* Fr. Roger Lee joined the Company of Jesus in 1600. He was minister of the College at St. Omer and known for his charity and piety.

quickly disposed to criticise whatever is out of the ordinary. He stated that he had been informed of the kind of life the "English Virgins" led from the very beginning, and that he could speak with perfect knowledge of the company in which "the most complete self-abnegation was taught," declaring that "their life was above all praise." Taking up the charges made against them of usurping the ministry reserved to priests only, his Lordship adds : "They have not established apostolic missions, but using a liberty common to all, they go from time to time to England to secure the payment of their dowries and for other affairs of this kind. . . . If during their stay in their country they do good by their example and conversation to those who surround them, who would dare to blame them?"

Meantime Mary was preparing a memorial to be laid at the feet of the reigning Pontiff, Paul V. At the end of 1615, a distinguished friend of theirs, Mr. Thomas Sackville,* was entrusted with the petition, together with letters of recommendation

* Dr. Champney, writing to More, the agent of the secular clergy, says of Sackville : "Assure yourself he is the fittest man I know to take away all let and set forward all good designs."

from Bishop Blaise of St. Omer to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and others. The document is in Latin, well drawn up, and contains a perfect sketch of the spirit and object of the Institute, as well as of the work, statutes, and form of government. In it Mary petitioned for herself and her subjects to be dispensed from enclosure and also from wearing a monastic dress, in order to render the work of the Sisters possible in England, where the laws were adverse to the Catholic faith and to religious. She asked, moreover, that the supreme authority in the Institute should be entrusted to a Superior-General, directly subject to the Pope for the power of dismissing any unfit or unruly member. The Congregation was to be divided into four classes : the novices, lay assistants, mistresses, who were to take simple vows after two years' noviceship, and the professed, who were to be called Mothers. Although no mention is made of St. Ignatius in the memorial, the context shows clearly the source from which Mary drew the materials for it.

The Pope immediately entrusted the examination of the proposed Institute to a commission of Cardinals, and in April of the

same year Cardinal Lancellotti, Prefect of the Congregation of the Council, in an answer to the Bishop of St. Omer, recommended in the name of the Sovereign Pontiff the English Ladies to the protection of his Lordship, "in order that they, by Divine help, be the more inflamed to religion and produce daily more abundant fruit of their labours," and he promised that if they persevered the Holy Apostolic See would also deliberate about confirming the Institute.

We can well imagine the joy with which the Community received this encouragement from the highest authority. The well-founded hope it gave to Mary of a future confirmation was the subject of her deepest gratitude. This joy, however, was saddened by the loss of Father Robert Lee, their devoted friend, who had helped them so much towards the success of the mission to Rome.

Animated with new zeal by this first act of benevolence of the Sovereign Pontiff, Mary resolved to found a second house in Liège. She was powerfully seconded in this undertaking by the Rev. Fr. Gerard, Rector of the English College there, and by the Prince Bishop of this town, Ferdinand of Bavaria,

and the Apostolic Nuncio, Mgr. Antonio Albergati. The foundation in Liège was also highly approved of by the Bishop of St. Omer, who writes to the Prince Bishop that the modesty, gravity, and piety of the English Ladies "are their best recommendation." In a pastoral letter which was published in 1617, the worthy Prelate defines clearly their position in the Church: "They enjoy," says he, "the favours and privileges granted by the Holy See to religious Orders at their beginnings, before their formal approbation." Fr. Vitteleschi, General of the Society of Jesus, also in a laudatory letter to one of the English Ladies, uses words to the effect that she had embraced a pious kind of life, dedicating herself completely to the service of God for the salvation of souls.

It was under these happy auspices that the house of Liège was opened, which in all human probability seemed destined to prosper.

CHAPTER V.

ENGLAND, at the very time at which the war against Catholics raged most fiercely, had a powerful attraction for Mary's generous soul, strong to face and overcome all kinds of dangers. She who, in all her actions, was intent only on following the divine impulse, and who knew how in the smallest circumstance to find occasion for advancing God's glory, took advantage of her frequent and prolonged sojourns in her own country to establish a little group of her daughters in London—a small, hidden band, it is true, but animated with the spirit which forms apostles.

Thus the spring of 1617 found her in London, where Abbot, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, afraid of her influence, issued severe orders for her arrest. He himself asserted that, "she did more harm than six Jesuits."

It was during those anxious days that she came to the conclusion that it was opportune to transfer the noviciate of St. Omer to a house in Liège, which was to be entirely

separate from the house of education on Mount S. Martin. Here, as in St. Omer, the Sisters enjoyed the favour and protection of the Bishop of the town, Prince Ferdinand, who often used to say Mass in the church of the Community. When she had seen the new foundation well established, Mary returned to London to join her courageous little company in Spitalfields. This first London filiation had at once become a refuge for priests and for the Catholic laity ; but the suspicions of their enemies being excited, Mary moved to Hungerford House, in the Strand, where she and her sister Barbara, in order to escape discovery, assumed the name of Tyrrel and the dress of ladies of rank, a subterfuge which became, eventually, the pretext for serious accusations. Later on we see our heroines at Knightsbridge, the guests of a Protestant friend who, for his generous hospitality, was rewarded with the gift of the true faith, and who used to express his admiration for Mary with the rather quaint remark : " Except the Mother of God, there was never such a woman."

The work of the English Ladies in those days of a persecution which constantly grew in intensity required extraordinary courage

and prudence in no common degree. For this reason Mary chose among her companions those whom she knew to be equal to the perilous circumstances of their mission in London. One of them was Susanna Rookwood, who endured the hardships of imprisonment at five different times. All of the Sisters visited the prisoners, and seconded the efforts of the persecuted priests, who were naturally much impeded in the exercise of their ministry. They prepared the way for the latter by instructing the converts and re-animating the fervour of those who had fallen into negligence, so that the missionaries, to whom every moment was precious, had only to crown their work by the administration of the Sacraments. God visibly blessed the loving efforts of each one of those earnest souls, especially of Mary, who at that time had the consolation of converting a priest of the name of Singleton. The unfortunate man had neglected his religious duties so far as even to forget the prayers and ceremonies of holy Mass. Her zealous activity was characterised by a certain holy joy, a fearlessness which made her face dangers and perils without hesitation.

It was about that time that she undertook

a pilgrimage to Wisbeach, a town and castle in Cambridgeshire, where a great number of priests were languishing in confinement. In this she was guided by her veneration for these heroic confessors of the faith, visiting them and procuring them the bodily relief of which they were in such great and urgent need, many of them being sick and suffering from starvation and want of the necessities of life.

In the midst of these labours in which she spent all the energies of her great soul in the service of her brethren of the faith, Mary was sustained by the hope of obtaining the only reward she desired, the crown of martyrdom. And, in fact, there was a moment when this most ardent desire of her heart seemed on the point of being satisfied. At the beginning of 1619, having tried to cross to St. Omer, the ship was turned back by a contrary wind to the shores of England, and Mary fell into the hands of the pursuivants. Sent as a prisoner to London and taken before the magistrate, she made an open profession of her faith, holding her rosary in her hand. Hearing one of the justices utter some blasphemy against the Blessed Virgin, God's faithful servant fear-

lessly rebuked him for his impious words. On her way back from the tribunal she recited aloud Our Lady's litanies, and on her arrival at the prison, she knelt down and kissed the threshold sanctified by the feet of confessors and martyrs.

The particulars of this period of Mary's existence are very scanty, a fact one cannot sufficiently deplore. Still, from the facts recorded of her captivity, we must conclude that Mary was condemned to death, but that influential friends obtained her release and bought her life with gold.

It was not without the deepest sorrow that she saw the palm of martyrdom, so much desired, thus escape her hands. Instead of a short, bloody combat, God had in reserve for her long, interior, personal sufferings not less meritorious, and for Mary the Will of God was dearer than the immediate possession of the brightest crown in heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

MARY WARD, directly she was set at liberty, crossed the seas to repair to Flanders, where troubles of a very different kind from those she had just so bravely borne were awaiting her. The Sisters of the two Communities of St. Omer and Liège were divided into parties, and one of them, named Sister Praxedes, had openly rebelled against the authority of the house in Liège. Being deluded by the evil one, she declared that she knew by revelation that the Institute was to abandon the Rule of St. Ignatius and be affiliated to another Order. Those who had disapproved of Mary's designs now supported this dangerous novelty ; and Sister Praxedes, by her plausibility and apparent holiness, succeeded in gathering round her some of the weaker members of the Community, who were all the more ready to follow her, as she declared she had received from on high the mission of transforming the Institute and of taking the reins of government.

In the midst of these serious disturbances, Mary did not allow any personal feeling to

enter her mind, but, as was usual with her, humbly turned at once to God and asked for light and guidance. So before making any decision, she entered upon the spiritual exercises, and thus in solitude and silence she begged of God to show her His Will. We have notes from her own hand, written at that time, in which this prayer is constantly recurring: "I ask neither life nor death, but only to do Thy holy Will, oh my God! Do with me what pleases Thee most." Fully disposed to put into what she reputed worthier hands than hers the work that Providence had entrusted to her, she could not, however, upright and wise as she was, blindly believe in the truth of supposed revelations in which the spirit of pride and insubordination was plainly visible.

But God was about to interpose in such a manner as to give those deluded souls a terrible lesson and strike all concerned with the clear light of truth. Sister Praxedes fell ill, and affirmed that if she died, they might hold for certain that she had been deceived in her opinion and that, on the contrary, Mary Ward was enlightened and led by God. The next morning, to the dismay of all, Sister Praxedes was dead; she had died

during the night. The impression caused by this was great and salutary. Some of the disaffected members left the Congregation, others were dismissed, and so peace was soon restored.

In these trials Mary was consoled by the faithful devotion of friends such as the Bishop of Liège and the Archbishop of Cologne, who urged her to open a house in his city. She accepted the offer, and extended her work of education to the neighbouring town of Trèves.

This rapid increase of houses of the Institute, also the recent grave disturbances in the house of Liège, made her feel more than ever the urgent necessity of having the Rule firmly established, a privilege which could only be secured by the formal approbation of the Holy See. But before taking any further steps, she asked counsel from men whose enlightened judgment, experience, and holiness could be the only safe guide in so important a matter.

At this critical juncture Providence put a most valuable friend in Mary's path; this was Fr. Domenico di Gesù e Maria, a discalced Carmelite, known and admired all over Europe for his sanctity. He first met Mary

at Trèves in the June of 1621. She disclosed her plans to him, and told him of the great desire she had of going herself to Rome to solicit in person the formal approbation of the Holy See. The saintly religious encouraged Mary to persevere in her design, and in particular he approved her plan of going herself to Rome. Enlightened by a prophetic spirit, he told her she was to be called upon to suffer much, that "she would be trampled upon," and that her companions would be abandoned like young birds deprived of their mother. Better than any other, the great Carmelite was in a position to understand the difficulties of one whom he was to meet again more than once in the course of his apostolic life. One of Mary's hardest trials was, as we have seen, to be misunderstood by her own people and misjudged by others. Fr. Domenico di Gesù had drunk to the dregs this same cup of bitterness; and the extraordinary veneration with which his old age was surrounded was perhaps the reward for his heroic patience under humiliations from those dearest to him and the contempt of his own brothers.

Determined as Mary now was to go to

Rome, encouraged also by the counsel of men of sound experience, she began her preparations for the journey, starting from Brussels on October 21st of the same year (1621), where she had gone to take leave of her protectress, the Archduchess Isabella. Her Highness welcomed Mary most affectionately and gave her an autograph letter for his Holiness Pope Gregory XV, successor to Paul V, and also she obtained for her letters of recommendation from the King of Spain and the Emperior Ferdinand. Following the advice of her Highness, Mary assumed the pilgrim's costume,* which, in the seventeenth century, still inspired deference and respect, even in Protestant countries. The few companions whom Mary took with her, and who were all animated with the same spirit, were Barbara Ward and Mary's tried friend, Winefred Wigmore ; a priest, Fr. Henry Lee ; a lay Sister, and a manservant who took care of the two horses and luggage. A gentleman, Robert Wright,† a near relative of Mary, whose life reads like a stray page from the

*The pilgrim's hat worn by Mary on her journeys is preserved in the Institute house in Altötting, Bavaria.

† Robert Wright died in 1683, in the house at Augsburg, where Mary Pointz was then Superior.

lives of the Saints, also accompanied her on her travels. He was born of an ancient Catholic family and at the age of twenty left everything to serve God, in obedience and humility, as the servant of the English Ladies. He continued this service for sixty years, hiding under a poor exterior the secret of his gentle origin, speaking little, praying much, and attached to his employers by a devotion which nothing could shake.

The cavalcade crossed the different countries without serious obstacles, but not without great fatigue. They stopped at Loreto, where Mary passed a whole night in prayer at the shrine, and during this vigil she received an intuition of the suffering that awaited her in Rome. Every step of the journey towards the Eternal City was sanctified by prayer ; the sight of the Alps, their torrents, their forests and their snowy summits, all excited in Mary and her companions outbursts of enthusiasm and expressions of gratitude towards the Supreme Beauty, whose image they saw reflected in the majesty of nature.

In the accounts which the pilgrims give us of their experiences, they enter into certain particulars which permit us to follow them

closely and admire the forethought with which everything had been organised. One of the two horses carried the luggage, whilst the other was left at the disposal of those of the Sisters whose physical strength was strained by so long and tedious a journey and obliged them from time to time to seek some relief. Mary was the soul of the little party. Always patient under difficulties and courageous in danger, she showed rare affability to the poor and little ones she met on the road. Her sister Barbara vied with her in "consoling and serving everybody." At last, on December 24th, the eve of Our Blessed Lord's Nativity, the weary travellers set foot on the sacred soil of the Eternal City. A friendless stranger, Mary turned to the Saints in heaven in fervent prayer to obtain protection and help, and at once, even before looking out for a night's shelter, she hastened to prostrate herself at the tomb of the Apostles beneath the dome of St. Peter's and to pay a visit to the church of the Gesù. She then secured a temporary residence for herself and her companions in a house of modest appearance near the English College, where some of them had near relations and friends among the students.

By a providential disposition of God, it chanced that the Carmelite, Fr. Domenico di Gesù, was in Rome at this time, and it was through his influence that Mary had the privilege of an audience with the Pope on the very day after her arrival, the feast of St. Stephen; a day on which it was the custom for a student of the English College to preach in the Pope's Chapel. His Holiness Gregory XV received Mary with the most fatherly kindness, and spoke of the necessity of her work, saying that, "God had in good time provided for His Church." It is evident that the Pope had the utility of women's work in his mind, for when writing to the Archduchess Isabella he more fully expresses his views: "Mary's piety," he says, "is highly to be praised, which has with such labour gathered together a band of companions whom she brings forward and offers for God's honour, at a time when the prince of darkness employs so many hosts of ungodly men in the fight against the Catholic faith. We rejoice that so many noble women stand beneath her banner." Speaking of Mary in particular, his Holiness further writes: "As the letter of your Highness contains such an excellent testi-

mony of all her virtues, we desire that her piety and this commendation should be weighed with no little favour, and have therefore commanded that her Institute and its scope should be immediately taken into consideration."

Mary lost no time in presenting the outline of her plan to His Holiness and the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

Her petition was clear and explicit. She asked that: "The Rules and Constitutions of St. Ignatius, the manner of life and approved practice (altogether independent, however, of the Fathers of the said Society), be likewise approved and confirmed in and to us so far forth as God has not prohibited by diversity of sex, as in ministering the sacraments, public preaching, teaching, and public disputing of matters of divinity and all such things as are only lawful for priests to exercise." There was a further petition for dispensation from all jurisdiction, except that of the Apostolic See.

The chief obstacle to Mary's plan and that which rendered the confirmation of her Institute so difficult, not to say almost impossible, was the novelty of its provisions for religious women. Of these, the first and

most striking was the desired exemption from enclosure and from the jurisdiction of the Ordinary.

The matter was referred by the Pope to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars with an intimation that His Holiness would be glad if favour could be shown to the English Ladies, who had come to him recommended by the Emperor, the King of Spain and the excellent Archduchess Isabella. The plan of the Institute, on account of the canonical difficulties already mentioned, required most careful examination, and it is hardly astonishing to find that the proceedings extended over more than ten years—years of alternate hope and disappointment. The chief reasons for this slow procedure were two : the prudence and wisdom of the Holy See on the one side, and the novelty of the proposals on the other which gave rise to much criticism and distrust. It is no easy task for us in the present day, when the Church and society at large enjoy the benefits Mary's inspired undertaking brought into the system of conventual life for women, after the radical changes made by the Holy See in her original proposals, to grasp her real position in presence of traditions, customs, ecclesiastical

laws, unaltered through centuries, and on the observance of which the Holy Pontiff Pius V had so recently insisted.

With an admirable deference to the petitioners, the Sacred Congregation, anxious to make them all possible concessions, promised to sanction the Institute and its end if Mary would only accept the mitigated form of enclosure adopted in the monastery of Torre de' Specchi by the Oblates of St. Francis of Rome. But Mary, convinced that it was God's will her Institute should exclude all idea of enclosure, did not accept the proposal, giving for her real reason that her work having England foremost in view, the enclosure in the sad conditions of this heretical country was practically impossible and meant absolute failure to attain the end of her Institute. Besides this question of ecclesiastical discipline, there arose another which obliged the authorities entrusted with the examination of the case to be still more guarded in their decision. In some of the houses in Belgium differences and divisions had crept in, slight, it is true, and soon remedied, but the malignant and exaggerated accounts from Mary Ward's enemies naturally led the authorities to fear the government of

a Congregation, already numerous, by a General Superior alone, might be insufficient for its needs. Evidently the time was not yet ripe for so bold an innovation, and consequently for a concession granted a hundred and thirty years later by Benedict XIV to the same English Ladies; a concession which has served as a precedent for many other Congregations of women since that time.

While these adverse circumstances brought forth as their immediate result Mary's admirable virtues of loving submission to the Church, humility, forbearance, and magnanimity of soul, they at the same time served to bring out the inexplicable opposition her work met with in the very country for which it was founded. It is certain that this adverse feeling, among the English clergy in particular, proved most injurious to Mary in Rome, and increased in an especial way the hindrances to be overcome. Still, those who are acquainted with the sad pages of the history of Catholicism in England in those days will understand how it was that souls united by a common love for the true faith, ready to give up wealth, family, and life for it, were divided among themselves on questions of mere detail, a situation on which

heretics traded for their own profit. In the reign of James I especially the state of trouble and terror in which the Catholics lived, the absence of an official head, the impossibility for priests to meet and discuss matters of the utmost importance, the insidious questions they were called upon to answer, all this had brought into relief, side by side with the most heroic virtues, human passion, pettiness, and violence. To Mary Ward the differences between the regular and secular clergy were a source of distress and trouble. Having adopted St. Ignatius' Rule for her Institute, she drew on herself all the antipathy to the Jesuits and the accusations brought against them, as if her work had been incorporated with that of the Society.

Another cause of the suspicion towards Mary and her work is to be found in a quarrel between the English clergy and the party adverse to the appointment of a Bishop proposed by the Holy See for the government of the Church in England, a party which contained many personal friends of Mary. This fact was more than sufficient for the supporters of the appointment, then most influential in the Roman Curia, to render the Institute for which Mary was pleading an object of mistrust.

In the midst of such grave and unfavourable conflicts, Mary, unshaken in her determination, proposed a plan as wise as it was opportune. She applied for and obtained the permission to open a house of the Institute in Rome. This implied a public school with gratuitous classes for the poor. Here the pupils were not only instructed in Christian doctrine, but also in practical and useful industries by which they might gain their future livelihood. Thus Mary's work had now a good opportunity of being tried under the eyes of all, and Cardinal Melino, under whose immediate jurisdiction the English Ladies were, was soon convinced of its utility, and approved of their work and manner of life.

But in order to carry on the new establishment more reinforcements were necessary, especially as one of the four companions who had accompanied Mary to Rome, and who had so lovingly and devotedly shared her toils and anxiety, was soon to be called to receive the reward of a short and full life. In the summer of 1622, whilst the negotiations with the Roman Congregations were going on, the whole household was visited by an epidemic of small-pox, from which all

recovered except Barbara Ward. The kind Sisters of Torre de' Specchi, with whom the English Ladies were on most friendly terms, begged to be allowed to take her into their convent, hoping by their special care to cure her. But all was of no avail.

Deep and universal sympathy was shown in Rome towards Mary and her companions during this period of anxiety. Masses and prayers were daily offered for Barbara Ward's recovery, and their faithful friends, the nuns of Torre de' Specchi, kept continual watch before the Blessed Sacrament exposed on their altar for her. Still Barbara grew worse every day, and on January 25th, 1623, after having edified all around her by her cheerfulness and fortitude, she gave up her angelic soul to her Maker, invoking the name of Jesus with her last breath.

Mary Ward, after witnessing this touching scene, accepted the loss of her saintly Sister with heroic courage and submitted to the Divine Will with complete resignation. She herself dressed the remains of her dear Sister Barbara, laid her in her coffin, and had her buried in the church of the English College at the foot of the Altar of Our Lady.

CHAPTER VII.

DURING her sojourn in Rome, interrupted by short absences, Mary was far from remaining inactive, and largely availed herself of the permission of the Holy See to begin new foundations both in Italy and Germany. These houses, it is true, answered only indirectly to the chief and original scope of Mary's work, which was to help on the salvation of souls in England; but her well-inspired mind could not fail to anticipate the advantages that would accrue from such foundations to the Church and her Institute. With a keen foresight, she understood that in bringing her Sisters to live their life under the very eyes of the Sovereign Pontiff, she pleaded more eloquently in favour of the work than by any other means. In fact, if the popularity of the English Ladies and their services for the education of the young were unable to obtain official recognition, they contributed nevertheless to save the Institute from utter ruin, and pleaded its cause on the day on which this ruin seemed complete. Religious vocations meanwhile

were multiplying in England. In the sad and unhappy state of the island in religious matters, innocent and courageous souls felt an immense thirst for expiation and immolation. Mary's new establishments opened to her fellow-countrywomen secure places of shelter in which they could follow the bent of their inclinations and consecrate themselves to God's service ; and we find even at that time the oldest Catholic families represented in the ranks of the " English Virgins."

It was in March of 1623 that Mary Ward, her companion Winifred Wigmore, a lay Sister, Fr. Henry Lee and Robert Wright left Rome on foot to open a house in Naples. They had but very scanty means at their disposal. The house in Rome worked gratuitously for the poor, and the Sisters were suffering much from the effects of poverty. But Mary's implicit trust in Providence guided her as usual, and she knew that her confidence would not be in vain. On her arrival in Naples she rented a house, the sanitary conditions of which left so much to be desired that she soon fell seriously ill. She got better, however, thanks to the kind offer of a friend, who gave Mary the use of an unfurnished house in a healthier quarter

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of the city. They possessed no worldly wealth and, indeed, had to sleep on the bare floor until a certain servant of God told a friend of his that it was a shame she should have so many beds in her house when a saint was sleeping on the ground. The lady came to see Mary, and from this day may be dated the interest taken by the Neapolitan ladies in her plans. The Nuncio and the Archbishop approved of their work, and the summer once over, schools were opened to all classes of children. Mother Susanna Rookwood, who had been Superior in England, was appointed to take the direction of the house in Naples.

In November, Mary Ward returned to Rome. Here Pope Gregory XV, having died a few months before, had been succeeded by Urban VIII. In the following January, Mary, still suffering from ill-health, again undertook a journey, this time towards peaceful Umbria. She had been moved to this step by the urgent appeal of Mgr. Napoleone, Bishop of Perugia, and the leading citizens of the town, to found a house there. The reception that awaited her and her companions was most cordial, and even festive. It chanced that on the

day of their arrival the Bishop and clergy were making their annual procession in honour of their patron, St. Constantius, and his Lordship made it the occasion for giving a public reception to the Sisters, who thus unexpectedly experienced a most cordial welcome from the entire population of Perugia.

The anxiety of mind caused by the new work and the fatigue of the journey, which Mary Ward had performed as usual on foot, brought on a severe attack of stone, and the doctors ordered her to the baths of San Cassiano in the mountains, about two miles from Perugia. During her stay there Mary obtained by her prayers the cure of Cardinal Trescio, whom she met in that place, and to whom she was much indebted. On foot and fasting, she made a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Monte Giovino, arriving there early one afternoon. Having asked that the Blessed Sacrament should be exposed, she remained in prayer before It for five hours, still fasting. At the end of this long vigil she said: "I have no more to ask: the Cardinal is either mended or dead," and at that very moment—as was afterwards known—the fever left him. Before Mary Ward's departure from Perugia,

Mgr. Napoleone, the Bishop, died. He was succeeded by Cardinal Torres, and the foundation, which had such prosperous beginnings, was soon given up.

Still guided by what was uppermost in her soul, Mary, soon after her return to Rome, solicited and obtained an audience with the Holy Father, who was then at Frascati. Admitted to his presence with three of her Sisters, Mary told His Holiness they had come to petition that "he would confirm on earth that which had been confirmed in heaven from all eternity," that their manner of life had been practised for sixteen years in several countries and cities; that Pope Paul V had promised to confirm it. His Holiness listened to them kindly, saying that he knew their cause had been discussed, and that he would on his return to Rome inquire more fully into the matter from those to whom its examination had been entrusted. Before leaving the Pope's presence, Mary further begged for leave to have a chapel in their house in Rome, a privilege His Holiness most readily granted.

In compliance with Mary's request, Pope Urban limited the further discussion of the affairs of the Institute to a commission of

four Cardinals only ; they were their Eminences Cardinals Bandino, Mellino, Cobelluzio, and Barberini, the Pope's own brother. Seeing that the question of enclosure was still meeting with the same opposition as before, Mary, who had always the spiritual welfare of her own country in view, asked that the exemption from enclosure should be granted at least for England and Flanders, and to a limited number of Sisters, about one hundred. The members chosen for the commission left her little hope of success. Opinions in Mary's favour by Fr. Suarez and Fr. Lessius, written in 1615, and a paper by Fr. Burton, drawn up in 1622 and approved by Lessius, were presented ; but the attack made upon the Institute by Thomas Rant, the Agent for the English Clergy, prevailed.

When Mary Ward learnt from Cardinal Mellino that a Decree against her and hers was imminent, she had recourse to Cardinal Borghese, and apparently by his influence the blow was for a time averted. This took place about Easter in the year 1645, but before many months had passed the order came for the closing of the schools in Rome. Parents went to the Cardinal Vicar to plead

the cause of the English Ladies for the sake of their children, and asked the intervention of Donna Costanza Barberini, the Pope's sister-in-law, who was known to be Mary's great friend. All this, however, did not avail to avert the blow. Mary received the decision without a murmur, or sign of disapprobation, giving thus to all a striking example of perfect submission to authority.

In spite of uncertainties, tribulations and bitter deceptions in those long years of trial, our heroic foundress seems to have been granted by God deeper and greater spiritual comforts in proportion as the thorns multiplied on her path. Truly, if Almighty God allowed his faithful servant to be left a prey to continual contradiction, He permitted her to be consoled by the devotion and friendship of a great number of saintly souls. Chief among these were some of the most venerated members of the Sacred College, such as their Eminences Cardinal Borghese (nephew of Paul V), Cardinals Frescio, Bandino, Ginnasio, and Hohenzollern, all of whom declared themselves in her favour. Princess Costanza Barberini had the most tender affection for her, and rendered her and her companions numerous and signal services.

Moreover, no one could appreciate better than Mary the countless blessings and spiritual comforts attached to the Eternal City; the Churches with their relics and holy memories; the glorious voices of the past making themselves heard from the tombs of the martyrs. All this life of faith Mary enjoyed to the full, and it sustained her in her daily sufferings. Extraordinary favours, of which her companions kept a record, came also to fortify her soul; and these heavenly communications produced in her a complete abandonment to Divine Providence and an invincible trust in the future. If God allows His work to be delayed for a time, final success and the way in which it can be accomplished depend entirely and solely on His Divine Will. Some time after the adverse decision which had checked her long-cherished plans, Mary determined to visit England, making her way there through Germany. The Thirty Years' war was then raging, and the Catholics were engaged in a fearful struggle for the faith. The hope of being of some use to them in this crisis spurred Mary on to choose this route, and God, whose designs are inscrutable, made her journey through Germany serve a purpose which she

had never contemplated. It offered her the opportunity of extending her Institute and founding a house which was eventually to become an ark of salvation for the scattered members of the Institute in the stormy period of the suppression; a shelter where they could wait for the better and more prosperous days which God had in store for them. She was provided with several letters of recommendation; among others was one from Fr. Mucius Vitelleschi, and another from Fr. Domenico di Gesù, who was held in great veneration by the Elector Maximilian and by the Emperor Ferdinand. Mary started on her laborious journey in the November of 1626 with a few companions and her two faithful followers, Fr. Henry Lee and Robert Wright. The great regard which both Prelates and high personages continued to show her, their esteem for her and her companions, are evident proofs that the closing of the schools in Rome did not involve any belief in the personal accusations made against the members of the Institute, nor was it regarded as equivalent to a condemnation of the Institute itself.

After a short stay in Florence, Parma and Castiglione, in each of which places

Mary was most kindly received by the reigning families, the tired travellers reached Milan. The Archiepiscopal See was then filled by Cardinal Frederico Borromeo, nephew and successor of St. Charles. He was known for his asceticism, his rare austerity of life and so extreme a reserve, that he never admitted any women into his palace. We can therefore well imagine the surprise of the inhabitants of Milan when they saw the extraordinary cordiality with which their saintly Archbishop received Mary Ward and her companions. After entertaining them, and rejoicing with the Sisters in their possessing such a Mother, he sent them in his own carriage, under the guidance of one of his own priests, to visit the city.

The winter of 1626 was unusually severe, a fact which contributed to make the journey a most painful ordeal and the crossing of mountains a perilous enterprise. Almost penniless, ignorant of the language, an object of suspicion to the inhospitable inhabitants of the heretical countries they had to traverse, the travellers, foot-sore and exhausted, finally reached Feldkirch, the first Catholic town of the Austrian Tyrol, in time to celebrate the sweetest of the mysteries of our

holy faith, the birth, according to the flesh, of our Divine Saviour. Mary's first care on reaching the end of any stage in her journey was to seek rest in a church, where, at the foot of the altar, forgetful of her weariness, she poured out her soul to God in prayer. In this case her vigil lasted from nine in the evening, through the Midnight Mass, until three the next morning, in spite of the intense cold. The pious Tyrolese were struck with the devotion of the foreign travellers, and crowded at once to welcome them. They remained, however, but a very short time in that genial atmosphere of faith, and soon continued their journey towards Innsbruck. Here Mary and her party were hospitably received by the Archduke Leopold and his wife, Claudia di Medici, sister of the Archduke of Tuscany. They showed them every mark of esteem and provided them with one of their carriages to proceed to Hall on the Inn, where they were entertained by the Ursulines. They then continued their journey to Munich. Before entering the city, Mary, turning suddenly to her companions, told them the journey to Flanders and England would not take place, and added soon after, "What will you say if we obtain a

house here?" Then, in a prophetic tone, she announced to them that the Elector would give them not only a residence in Munich, but also means for their maintenance. An old tradition, current in Bavaria for two centuries, relates that the first meeting of the Sovereigns with the English Ladies took place on a hill called Iserberg, to which place the wife of the Elector had induced him to drive, saying to him, "Who knows whether we may not meet a saint!"

Whatever the facts may be, Mary very soon obtained access to the Sovereigns, and Maximilian, who was great not only in soul and in his love of God, but also in mind and character as a man and a ruler, readily appreciated the virtues and motives of the refined and highly-gifted English Lady who presented herself as a stranger at his court. He very soon put at her disposal a large house situated in the Weinstrasse and called "Paradeiserhaus"* (from the name of its owner), and he had the extensive building furnished at his own expense. The house was joined to a chapel dedicated to Our Lady

* The English Ladies lived in the Paradeiser-house from 1626—1808. The house was restored at the end of the seventeenth century by the Elector Max Emanuel; it is now the headquarters of the police.

of the "Grotto," which was frequented by many devout pilgrims. The authorisation for opening free schools for the poor was accompanied by a promise of a yearly revenue sufficient for the maintenance of the Sisters. An attempt of some Prelate to throw discredit on Mary did not influence the Elector, who, in giving up the house to her, remarked: "The English were the first to teach the faith to this people; now they must teach them to live as Christians." The schools prospered and were attended by a large number of children.

In 1627, Ferdinand, Emperor of Austria, invited Mary to come and choose a residence in Vienna for her Sisters. He had heard from his brother-in-law, the Elector Maximilian, of the good work begun by the English Ladies in Munich, and was likewise encouraged by Fr. Dominico di Gesù, to whom he had written for advice on this matter. She accepted his invitation, and proceeding to the Austrian capital, opened schools which ere long were attended by over 400 children of all classes.

In the same year Mary was requested to open a house in Presburg. The plan met with the most violent opposition on the part



A. P. M. M. M. M. M.

Mary Ward.

*Engraved from the original oilpainting in the Paradeiser Haus,
the first Convent of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Munich.
Now in the possession of the Nuns of the Institute at Alttötting, Bavaria.*



of the Calvinists, but the patience and judicious conduct of Cardinal Pazmanny, Metropolitan of Hungary, at last overcame the difficulties, and the zealous workers hastened to their new field of labour.

It was during Mary Ward's stay in the imperial city that a further settlement in Ferdinand's dominions was offered her by a convert from Lutheranism, Count Adolph Althan, a Bohemian noble in the Austrian Court, distinguished for his virtue and merit. He was ill with the gout, and the malady mounting to his head deprived him of all sleep and threatened his life, when Mary and her community, through twelve hours of continuous prayer obtained his cure. On his recovery, the Count, in gratitude for the favour thus obtained, had a great desire to help in the establishment of the English Ladies in his native city of Prague. Here again serious opposition was encountered, this time of a very different kind. The Archbishop of Prague had been led by the representations of a Capuchin Friar of great repute to think unfavourably of the English Ladies, and so opposed the new foundation in spite of the known wishes of the Emperor himself and the Bohemian

nobles. Hitherto the question of jurisdiction had not arisen, but now the Cardinal Archbishop desired to be assured of the entire submission of the English Ladies to the jurisdiction of the Ordinary. This was a matter, as we have seen, contrary to the original design of Mary Ward, as expressed in her petition to the Pope. It gave rise at once to great difficulties, and was the first of many troubles which came upon the Institute and involved Mary, her companions, and their work in disastrous consequences. The Nuncio in Bohemia strongly supported the Cardinal Archbishop, and Cardinal Klessel, Archbishop of Vienna, who had not only made no objection to the new Institute, but had actually countenanced it, now wrote to the Pope on the subject asking for direction. It is well to notice here that Mary never really meant to withdraw the Institute from under the pastoral care of the Ordinary, nor to refuse him the obedience he has a right to claim from any of the Faithful of his Diocese.

This was in May of 1628. A month previously a Congregation of four Cardinals, held in the Vatican in presence of the Pope, had decided that measures should be taken

through the Nuncios of the various countries to close the houses of the Institute. Instructions to this effect were sent to the Nuncios at Vienna and Brussels. Unfortunately, at this very time a difficulty arose in Munich, quite irrespective of the action of the Holy See. The incident shows that nothing was yet known of the orders already given to the Nuncios, but it nevertheless tended to alienate some of Mary's best friends, although it did not affect the good will of the Elector Maximilian.

The Bishop of Bâle, then residing in Bontrut, had become acquainted with the English Virgins and their Institute. Perceiving the value of a system of education and way of life such as theirs, he wished to incorporate into the Institute a large number of devout women, about 300 we are told, members of a half-formed Ursuline congregation. To this proposal the Bishop annexed as a condition that they should be at once considered as professed members of the Institute, a proposition which of course Mary could not accept. The refusal to receive these ladies, except on trial, gave great offence, and Mary's firmness on this point raised such animosity that the Bishop

and those connected with him protested they would leave no stone unturned to deprive her and her Institute of every friend they had in Bavaria and Austria.

In the meantime, when in Prague, Mary Ward had so violent an attack of her old malady that she was obliged to visit the baths of Eger in the mountains between Bohemia and Bavaria ; thence she returned to Munich, intending to go to Rome as soon as possible. She started, but her physical weakness increased so much that her companions feared she would not reach the end of the journey alive. It seemed more probable that she could not accomplish the journey than that she could. She said to her companion, Winefred Wigmore : " For the rest she was sure, lived she or died she, she served a good Master." After again visiting Loreto, one of her favourite sanctuaries, she continued her way towards Rome, where she arrived in a state of complete bodily exhaustion.

Now the moment was drawing near when the much-agitated question that had been pending for so many years was to receive its final solution. Although she had already, when in Germany, heard unfavourable reports

about the probable issue of her case, Mary, active as ever, compiled a narrative of the twenty-two years that she and her companions had lived together, and presented it to the Pope and the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Admitted to an audience, the Pope gave her the unusual permission to plead her cause in person before the Congregation of four Cardinals appointed for the examination of her affairs.

When the day for the discussion came, she was suffering so much from a cough that she could get no rest by day or night ; yet, in spite of this, she made her relation, which lasted three-quarters of an hour, without being troubled by it in any way. Mary put before their Eminences what the new Institute had done, and its approval by the Catholic Sovereigns of Flanders, Bavaria, and Austria. She told them of the favour shown the Institute by Popes Paul V and Gregory XV, as well as by the Bishops who had received the English Ladies. She herself could not with consistency change her plan, but if it were their decision that she should desist, she would at once humbly submit. So that the will of God were fulfilled in her and her companions she was content.

Cardinal Borgia, in referring the whole matter to the Pope, added, "he held it to be of God, and that he neither could nor durst be against it, nor was his power enough to assist it, such and so powerful were her enemies. Therefore he humbly entreated His Holiness that he might deal no more in it." Mary had now done her utmost to save her work, and judged it better to return to Germany and perhaps to England to try and mitigate the hostility felt against her. Her health was shattered and her poverty extreme, but her faith and courage grew stronger as the cross pressed more heavily on her. Hearing of her determination her companions, in such circumstances, were filled with dismay. She merrily remarked: "I have found out a good way to make our monies hold out: to be sure to deny no poor body an alms who shall ask it on the road." They had but one horse to ride by turns, and Mary walked in a pair of shoes which, as they did not fit her, added constant pain to her weariness. It is not much to be wondered at that her children in Germany should have preserved that pair of shoes to this day.

At that time Munich was not the residence

of the Nuncio, and therefore Mary made her way to Vienna to await there the good pleasure of His Holiness, which would more easily be communicated to her by the pontifical representative at the Austrian court. But here new troubles were in store for her. In Flanders things had been going on badly. Some Superiors, with the hope of saving their houses from the full force of the Decree promulgated by the Nuncio, had given up some part of that for which Mary Ward had contended, and with it gave up Mary herself. This kind of compromise left the impression that the others were opposing the action of the Nuncio, and thus brought discredit not only on the houses of Flanders but on the whole Institute. Hearing this, Mary immediately sent Winefred Wigmore to Flanders, but apparently too late to undo the evil.

At this period of bitter trial and harassing cares God did not leave His servant without some comfort, both human and divine. Cardinal Klessel, Archbishop of Vienna, for some unexplained reason, became her friend, and Fr. Domenico di Gesù having come on a mission from the Pope to the Emperor, she took the opportunity of opening to him the

state of her soul and putting before him the profound desolation of spirit in which she had long been plunged. For the saintly religious as well as for Mary, the moment was a solemn one. Fr. Domenico di Gesù, now feeble and worn out, was spending in peace the remaining years of a life devoted to the service of souls, and on the eve of entering into his rest, seemed already elevated above the passions and agitations of this world. Mary, still full of vigour, was preparing for the day of struggle close at hand. She felt, without, however, having any certainty, that the work of so many years was to be brought to an end by the authority she most venerated on earth. On the threshold of eternity the great and holy religious tried to prepare Mary for the tribulations that awaited her. He encouraged her in those virtues for which she was so remarkable—the forgiveness of injuries, and what is more perfect still, the love of enemies.

The year 1630 passed in anxious expectations of the Papal decree, when in November the news that the Institute would be suppressed reached Vienna. Faithful to her principles and tenacious of her original designs, she again at this supreme moment

made a final attempt, through Cardinal Borghese, to save her Institute. In a letter dated November 28th, 1630, she ventures to remind His Holiness in words of noble submission that the life she and hers had led for so many years was, as far as the human mind could see, inspired by God, from whom she had received the promise that the Institute would last in the Church to the end of the world ; but, she added, " I do not pretend to prefer such lights or inspirations to the authority of Holy Church ; I only desire to manifest them humbly to your Holiness, ready to abandon without reserve my kind of life if your Holiness commands it."

The Emperor Ferdinand, an admirer of the virtues of the English Ladies, and grateful for the good work they were doing in his dominions, would have defended them as far as was possible against extreme measures, resulting, as he maintained, from reports erroneous in themselves and injurious to religion. But Mary, confiding solely in God, did not wish to benefit by the protection of an earthly monarch, and, though she knew that the scrupulous character of Maximilian would cause him to put aside

any consideration that might hinder the execution of the orders given in Rome, she chose to wait for the final sentence where she knew it would be carried out rigorously. She repaired, therefore, to Munich, and the result of this journey in midwinter, probably on foot, was a dangerous attack of fever which confined her to her bed. She was just beginning to recover when the blow, so long expected and so justly feared, struck her. On January 13th, 1631, Pope Urban signed the Bull of Suppression of the Institute. On February 7th, the Dean of the Church of Our Blessed Lady with two Canons presented themselves at the Paradeiserhaus, and, producing a letter addressed to himself, read words to this effect: "Arrest Mary Ward as a heretic, schismatic, and rebel to the Holy Church." The Dean told her that the Commission from the Holy Office, signed by Cardinal Barberini, had reached him a fortnight before, but that he had not had the heart to execute it, and that in the meantime he had provided her a retreat in the convent of the Order of St. Clare called the "Anger." He proposed that her removal should be by night that it might not be publicly known.

Mary received the order with the greatest serenity of soul, and answered that she would willingly go to whatever prison they desired ; the more ignominious the better it would be. "Suffering without sin was no burden." She declined, however, to be taken away by night ; "the more it was known the better : it would be a wrong to her innocence to seek the darkness." Mary then explained to the Dean that she had never been prohibited from persevering in her Institute, and that she had always solicited in Rome to know the determination of the Pope, as her letters would show. All she had heard from His Holiness was in praise of her Society, and he had said : "If it were enclosed it would be like a wedge of gold, though without enclosure he would not confirm it." Mary then asked the Dean whether it was the Pope's will to destroy or to tolerate the Institute ; he answered that he did not know. It is clear, therefore, that the Bull of Suppression was not sent to Dean Golla with the letter of the Holy Office about Mary Ward.

Here it is necessary to distinguish two things : the Bull of Urban VIII, an act of wisdom and prudence (dictated by the fear that the members of the Institute had under-

taken works above their sex and strength and not in accordance with the then Ecclesiastical law); and secondly, the condemnation of Mary by the Holy Office—a measure, as we shall see, taken without the knowledge of the Holy Father.

Confronted with an order from the Holy See, submission is the only attitude consistent with a true Catholic soul; and, notwithstanding the severe terms of the Bull, Mary and her companions in Italy and Germany submitted heroically to all its provisions. The Decree of the Holy Office and the personal condemnation of Mary Ward, stigmatizing her as a rebel and a heretic, were the result of petty persecutions and the malignant insinuations of those who were opposed to her, whose names she and her Sisters generously conceal. In the designs of Providence it was one of those exceptional trials sent only to God's most faithful servants.

The Dean, having discharged his very unpleasant duty, was unwilling to grant Mary permission to take leave of the Sisters; he was deeply touched on seeing her kneel down to pray and then quietly prepare to leave the house. He would not hear of her going on foot, as she desired, but had a

carriage in readiness; and Mary, having thanked him for his trouble, accepted with loving and courageous submission, and in union with her Divine Model, the new humiliations in store for her.

Mary felt keenly the silence of the Elector and Electress, who had known a fortnight before what was in preparation for her. Although she appreciated the delicacy of their feelings on this occasion, their reserve nevertheless caused her much pain, but, as she very well remarked to those around her: "Mortification and suffering are best for us when most complete."

CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE the publication of the Bull of Suppression, Mary Ward had sent a circular to all the houses of the Institute, enjoining her daughters to obey the orders from Rome in all points. From her prison she wrote again at the request of the Dean, saying : "Observe, I pray you, what they contain with all promptitude and a right heart. In the secular state you may doubtless serve God much, and without your own or other's molestation."

The convent of the Poor Clares, called also the "Anger," to which Mary Ward was taken, stood in a solitary place at the gates of the city of Munich. A few years before, in one of her numerous journeys, Mary seemed to have had a vision of her future imprisonment in the Anger. On her way to the capital of Bavaria, accompanied by a pious woman of the country, Anna Maria Grünwalden, she suddenly turned to her, saying : "Anna Maria, what is the Anger? Are they not religious, and are they not called of St. James?" Having received a

reply in the affirmative, Mary continued : "Anna Maria, a day will come when I shall be imprisoned there as a heretic and you will be a religious." This, in fact, came to pass, for Anna Maria became a Poor Clare, and a few years afterwards Mary was confined in the convent on a charge of heresy.

The Community of the Anger enjoyed a great reputation for sanctity. One of the Sisters, a soul favoured by God, rich in virtue and old in years, said to the Lady Abbess on Mary's arrival in the monastery : "Mother, we have received a great servant of God, whose presence will be a blessing to the house." Very soon the religious learnt to appreciate the virtues of their prisoner, and according to Mary's own grateful testimony, treated her with every mark of respect, and were so good to her that she could not praise them enough. The Franciscan Fathers also, who then directed these saintly religious, were deeply edified at the joyful resignation of Mary, and declared that "her calm courage and cheerfulness were evident proofs of her innocence."

She was closely confined, however, under bolts and bars in a small room separated from the rest of the convent. It was intended

for patients suffering from infectious diseases, and was never used except in a case of extreme necessity. The ceiling was so low that it could be touched with the hand ; the two small windows, looking on to the graveyard, were boarded up to within a hand's breadth of the top. Someone who was in a dying state had long occupied the chamber, and had only been removed to make room for Mary ; and the walls, room, and furniture being left untouched, a revolting and unhealthy odour pervaded the place and tainted the atmosphere. The room was chosen without any intention of being cruel, but simply for convenience sake.

Here Mary and her faithful attendant Anne Turner had to live, and were not allowed to leave it, even for short intervals. Indeed, added to Mary's other sufferings—abrupt separation from all those dear to her, with humiliations and solitude—was the entire privation of spiritual comforts, even that of assisting at Mass and receiving the Sacraments. The prolonged sojourn of Mary in these unhealthy surroundings brought on a violent fever, and the doctor, entertaining no hope of her recovery, judged the moment had come for her to receive the last Sacra-

ments. When the permission was asked from the Dean, he refused to grant it unless Mary would submit to the condition he imposed. She was to sign a paper drawn up by Dean Golla, stating that "if she had ever said or done anything contrary to faith or against Holy Church, she repented and was sorry for it." Such a statement might have led to the belief that she was suffering justly, so, jealous of anything that might cast a shadow on what she knew to be the truth, Mary declined to sign the paper, but wrote in Italian a declaration of her loyalty and love for the Pope and the Church: "I have never done or said anything, either great or small, against His Holiness (whose holy will I have offered myself and do now offer myself, wholly to obey) or the authority of Holy Church. But, on the contrary, my feeble powers and labours have been for twenty-six years entirely, and as far as it was possible to me, employed for the honour and service of both, as I hope, by the mercy of God and the benignity of His Holiness, will be manifested in due time and place." To this she added that "she would not for a thousand worlds, or for the gain of whatever present or future seeming good, do the least thing unfitting the

dutiful service of a true Catholic and a most obedient daughter of Holy Church."

The rumour becoming current in the city that Mary, with the obstinacy of a heretic, had refused to sign the paper sent her by Dean Golla, the Sisters presented a copy of this letter to the Electress Elisabeth for Maximilian's information. The day after the declaration was written, Mary received the Holy Viaticum, and two days later still, her death being expected, Extreme Unction was administered to her by the Franciscan Confessor of the Poor Clares, the Abbess and the nuns standing around her bed showing every mark of sympathy. After an interval of thanksgiving, to the surprise of the bystanders, Mary, whose confidence that God would preserve her life was unaltered, made signs she would rise and asked to be carried to the Church, where her Sisters were anxiously awaiting her. Having spoken a few words of encouragement and advice to them, she was brought back to her cell and fell into a state of partial unconsciousness, which ended in a short sleep. The next day the doctor was astonished to find her recovering, and declared that this change "was a manifest interposition of God in order to

make her innocence clear before all men."

Forgetful of her own sufferings and with the cheerful serenity which never abandoned her, Mary was solely intent on consoling and encouraging her distressed children of the Paradeiserhaus, who numbered about forty. On receiving an intimation of what had befallen their Mother and foundress, Mary Pointz had written: "Who shall express the trouble into which we were thrown, when casting our thoughts on every side, we considered the weakness of her health and the power and violence of her enemies, which cut off help, except God alone, to whom we had recourse without ceasing."

In her loving ingenuity Mary found means of sending them small notes written in lemon juice and frequently headed "From my palace, not prison, for so I find it." "Vale," she adds at the end of some of these, "be merry and doubt not in our Master." It was by her instructions that her Sisters wrote to the Holy Office, not to appeal against the suppression, but to justify their foundress and beg that their "Mother Maria della Guardia being condemned on so great a charge as heresy, she be not deprived of her life also. For her weakness and indisposition of body

considered, to put her in prison can be deemed no other than to give her a violent death." To the Pope they spoke of her state as "if not death, a dying life. Vouchsafe, then, to call her to Rome, give her leave at least once to speak in her own cause, the case being made so public, and that of which she is accused and for which she is thus treated, so enormous."

The petition had the desired effect. His Holiness, after having read it, summoned a Congregation of Cardinals, at which he himself presided, and on examining the facts, stated that whilst the Bull of Suppression was issued by him, the Decree of the Holy Office, ordering Mary's imprisonment, had been sent without his knowledge. His Holiness sent at once an order to Munich to set "Maria della Guardia," as she was called, at liberty, at the same time authorising her to come and clear herself of the accusation brought against her orthodoxy—an accusation which, to those souls who prized so highly the integrity of the faith, was a grief far surpassing that of the suppression of their Institute. The Pope's answer to the Sisters' memorial reached the Paradeiserhaus on April 15th, and Mary's companions,

full of joy, hastened to the Anger, hoping to take their beloved Mother back with them; but Mary resolved to remain in recollection, in her prison, over Palm Sunday. It was an anniversary kept by her in memory of her dedication of her life to God twenty-two years before by a vow of perpetual chastity when she was on the point of leaving the Poor Clares at St. Omer's. Now, before leaving another convent of Poor Clares, she desired to spend her Palm Sunday in the re-dedication to God of her broken life.

On the Monday in Holy Week, the Electress sent her carriage to convey Mary to the Paradeiserhaus. The Poor Clares, who had had the opportunity of admiring and of becoming attached to their prisoner, parted from her with regret, and the kindest relations continued to exist between the two Communities. On re-entering the religious home of her dear Community, Mary knew full well what fresh sufferings were awaiting her. The wreck of the work of over twenty years, the prospect of a ruined harvest of souls, broken vocations, the manifold difficulties of the present, the uncertain future of those souls who had given up home and country and whom she loved as her own self,

the coldness and neglect of many who had been her friends, the contempt and scorn of the world, together with poverty and homelessness—all this she realised in a way well calculated to fill her with the most bitter agony of mind and heart, had she not possessed the heroic confidence of those souls who, putting all their trust in God, advance when others retreat, hope against hope, and the more they grow in sanctity, advance the more in the true liberty of the children of God.

At the time of this turning point of our history, there were ten houses of the Institute in full work and between two and three hundred Sisters, mostly of superior mind and good position. The terms of the Bull were precise and severe. In it the Institute of the English Ladies is declared to be suppressed, the Communities dissolved, and the members absolved from their vows. In Flanders the Bull was carried out to the letter, with extreme rigour; strange to say, the only certain knowledge we have of its publication in any place where a house of the Institute existed is Liège. Here the Bull was read in presence of the Provincial, the Superior, and nine of the elder Sisters, who

at once submitted in the name of all. Their schools were closed, their property confiscated, their revenues stopped; and being obliged to quit the two houses Mary had so well organised, they found themselves homeless, penniless, and almost friendless. It was difficult, not to say impossible, for some to return to their families or friends or to join other Orders. This was especially the hard lot of those who had come from England, as most of the Sisters had done.

We know from Mary Ward's own letter to Urban VIII that the scattered members of four houses were forced to beg their bread. In the French Necrology of the early Sisters of the Institute we find the name of one of Mary's first companions, Catherine Smith. She was Superior of one of these four houses and was conspicuous for her fortitude and trust in God in times of exceptional trials, which included even hunger and want. These she shared with many who likewise gave proofs of exalted virtues.

To the temporal needs of the members of the Institute must be added other trials of a more bitter kind. They were suspected of heresy, and the obloquy cast upon Mary Ward being widely known, many, even eccle

siastics, shrank from them ; and thus the Sisters were often debarred from those spiritual helps within the reach of all Christians. The want of money also compelled many of them to delay the exchange of the habit for the secular dress enjoined them by the Bull, a fact which drew upon them the scorn and contempt of those they met. It is related of a Bavarian Sister, Catherine Köchin, that, on presenting herself still dressed in the habit in a church to go to confession, she was saluted by the sacristan with a blow on the face, after which he drove her out into the street.

If such was the condition of the members of the Institute in Flanders, their Sisters in Bavaria, as we see by the example just related above, did not fare much better. It is true the Paradeiserhaus still gave shelter to the dissolved Community, but the means of subsistence were getting scarcer and their resources fewer every day. The schools were closed, the Elector had withdrawn his grant, and from the troubled state in England and the suspicion attached to the Institute, the Sisters now rarely got the money due to them. The pressure of public events came also to add to the hardships of the times.

The Thirty Years' War was raging in Germany, and the Swedes were carrying desolation and misery wherever they went. The plague came to add its horrors to those of the war; Munich was severely visited, and the members of the Institute did not escape the awful scourge. It is therefore no cause for wonder when we read that the destitution of the inmates of the Paradeiserhaus bordered on starvation.

There is an incident related in connection with this period of misery and universal distress which shows how God was pleased to reward the confidence of His servants. One day there was nothing left to eat but a small quantity of peas, enough for one person, and this was to serve for the dinner of the whole family. When the cook told her tale to Mary Ward, she desired her to prepare and serve them to the Community; to their astonishment the peas not only proved sufficient for all, but the original quantity that had been cooked was left in the dish.

It was at this time of general distress that the sterling virtues of one of the members, Anna Rörlin, were made conspicuous. As a native of the country, she felt herself less

exposed than her English companions, and therefore offered to go on a begging tour in order to find the means of support for her suffering sisters. She went on foot, walking long distances, and exposing herself to all kinds of dangers which the occupation of the district by foreign troops considerably increased.

It was in the midst of these crushing troubles that Mary resolved to go to Rome to clear herself of the stigma of heresy. She probably left Munich in April, 1632. Before leaving she recommended the faithful inmates of the house and the little flock of her scattered children, who had gathered round their Mother after the storm, to the affectionate care of Mary Pointz. Frances Constable, then a young religious full of health and of great promise, Mary confided especially to her, saying she would soon be in heaven. Her prediction was sadly realised, for on June 30th of the same year Frances died at the early age of sixteen. Mary took Elisabeth Cotton and Anne Turner for her travelling companions, and the journey from Munich to Rome was made on foot. The perils were great, and we know from tradition that in the forests of the Tyrol the courageous little band

ran the risk of being murdered, but they were saved by the prudence and prayers of Mary, which prepared the way for the conversion of the family of the would-be murderers.

Although, in obedience to the terms of the Bull, Mary and her companions were travelling in a secular dress, they nevertheless were received with the same cordiality as in the past by the reigning sovereigns, and on her arrival in Rome by the Cardinals. Admitted to a private audience,* her first words to His Holiness were : " Holy Father, I neither am, nor ever have been, a heretic." " We believe it, we believe it," replied the Pope. " We and the Cardinals are well informed as to yourself, and your habits, and your exemplary conduct. We and they all are not only satisfied, but edified, and we know that you have carried on your Institute well. We have nevertheless permitted the trial of your virtue, nor must you think it much to have been proved as you have been, as other Popes, Our predecessors, have done in similar cases, who have exercised the endurance of the servants of God." En-

* Elisabeth Cotton and Anna Turner accompanied Mary to Rome. Accounts of this audience are given by Vincentio Pageti, Fr. Lohner, Fr. Bissel and Winefrid Wigmore, authors of the first biographies of our Mother Mary Ward.

couraged by the benevolence of the Pope, Mary then asked for the release of Winefrid Wigmore, who was still in prison at Liège, and also that a number of the Sisters, most of them still quite young, in Germany, should be allowed to live with her in Rome. They could not be sent back to their homes in England for want of means and also on account of the danger to their faith. The Holy Father was ignorant of the captivity of Winefrid, and assured Mary he would give orders for her release. As to the second petition, his Holiness not only acceded to her wish, but gave assurance of his protection over those for whom Mary pleaded, saying : " Haveremo a caro che venghino e ne terremo sotto la nostra protezione."*

The results of this important interview were all the more consoling since the trials of the past years had been without comparison the hardest that could befall a devoted child of the Church.

Among those generous souls whose attachment to Mary had grown with adversity, we find her first companions, Winefrid Wigmore, Mary Pointz, Barbara Babthorpe, and a

* " We are glad that they should come, and we will take them under our protection."

group of young girls belonging to the old English Catholic nobility, some of them highly gifted, who, after having seen while still so young the suppression of the Institute, were to be in riper years the happy witnesses of its resurrection in its new form, with those points corrected to which objection had been made.

Whatever judgment Pope Urban may have formed of Mary's work, he could not fail to be won over to her cause by the loyalty and simplicity of her character, and by the unmistakable signs of holiness which she gave on the general destruction of her Institute.

He continued to show her marked kindness, and endeavoured to remove the prejudices felt towards her and hers, the inevitable consequences of the Bull. Thus we find that in a letter addressed by the secretary of the Holy Office to the Nuncio of Cologne, a tribute is paid to Mary's obedience and orthodoxy ; in it the docility of her companions is praised and they are warmly recommended "to the good offices of the representatives of the Holy See," so that restitution should be made to the English Ladies of the various properties which were in their possession at the time of the suppression. Leave was given by the Pope, with the willing concur-

rence of the Elector, for the members still in Munich to continue to live in the Paradeiserhaus, where a few years later they were able to re-open the schools for the poorer classes.

Conformably to the desire expressed by His Holiness, the young Sisters, for whom Mary had interceded, were brought from Munich to Rome in 1633 by Margaret Genison, the former Superior of Vienna. They took up their abode in the neighbourhood of St. Mary Major's, and were soon allowed to receive English pupils ; this became the Mother House and the residence of the chief Superior until some time after the approbation of the Rules in 1703.

English Catholics were then very numerous in Rome, and the house of the Institute soon became a centre where they loved to meet. Some ill-disposed people, alarmed at this popularity, went so far as to complain to the Pope about it. Urban's answer was that he rejoiced to hear of so many visiting Donna Maria della Guardia, for "those who go to her are either good or they will become so, since they frequent that house." Nothing could lessen the good will of the Sovereign Pontiff towards them. He settled a yearly income

on them, recommended them to the kindness of his sister-in-law, Donna Constanza, and her daughter, Donna Anna, as also to his nephews, their Eminences Cardinals Francesco and Antonio Barberini. On the arrival of Mary's companions from Munich, Donna Constanza lent them one of her carriages at the express wish of His Holiness. Donna Anna introduced them three at a time to the Pope, who received them with most fatherly kindness.

When Mary's health began to give serious cause for alarm, His Holiness once more requested Donna Constanza to see that she should not be in want of anything; he sent his own doctor to her; medicines were provided from his own pharmacy, and wine from his table. But in spite of this affectionate care, Mary continued to be tortured by the most cruel sufferings, which made the prolongation of her life almost a miracle; nevertheless, she could not be prevailed upon to diminish or suspend the austerities and mortifications which she had been accustomed to practise since her early youth. As the doctors had on several occasions ordered her the baths of San Cassiano, she at last submitted to their directions, but with little result. On leaving San Cassiano she repaired to a villa near

Piano Castagnano to stay there till the great heat was over, and she could return to the baths. This villa had been put at her disposal by a friend, the Marchese de Monte. During her stay here she edified all, priests, religious and lay people, by her exemplary patience under intense sufferings. What was still more admirable was the serenity and the unalterable joy of her soul in this constant state of ill-health. Not satisfied with being thus cheerful herself, she desired her companions to practise the same holy cheerfulness at all times and under all circumstances. "Be merry," she had written to Mary Pointz from her prison, "and never doubt of our Master." "In our calling," she says elsewhere, "a cheerful mind, a good understanding, and a great desire after virtue are necessary, but of all these a cheerful mind is the most so."

Her generosity and loving forgiveness of enemies were no less wonderful. On hearing that one of their adversaries had just died, she immediately ordered that "each one of the novices should pray for his soul; I ask God, according to our poor means, to forgive all our adversaries." She generally calls them by the name of "our good friends," prays for

them, offers regularly her Friday Communion for them, and advises her Sisters to consider them as busy adorning her crown, and worthy therefore of all her gratitude. "May the sweet Jesus forgive them," she writes; "I would like to do them as much good as they have done harm to me and mine."

The state of Mary's health was, as we have seen, a cause of serious apprehension; so much so that on July 30th she received the last Sacraments and the Papal blessing, brought to her by the Cardinal St. Onofrio, who, although he had at the time of the suppression himself signed the decree for her imprisonment, now expressed his esteem for her by saying: "Bless the Lord for having left her to you many years, until by word and example she has made others capable of governing in her absence." Mary lay between life and death through the heat of the summer of 1633 until August 10th, when after a night spent in great pain, she unexpectedly told Winefred that she would go to Spa. "I do not myself know," she said, "what God will do by it, but humanly speaking here I must die, there I may recover." Winefred replied: "But how for the wherewithal?" "God," answered Mary, "will provide."

It is probable that Mary's longing to see once more the little group of companions who were serving God and working in the interests of religion in England, entered much into her sudden determination. She had not seen them for fifteen years, and now that the remnant of her Institute had found in Rome and Munich an authorised shelter, it seemed to her as if God wished her to take up her abode in the midst of those of her daughters who were most exposed to danger.

She resolved to start in September, but on the day fixed for her last interview with the Pope she was unable to leave her bed. Not wishing to undertake her journey without the blessing of His Holiness, she sent Mary Pointz and Winefred Wigmore in her place. The Pope received them with his accustomed benignity and kindness, and promised them commendatory letters to the Nuncios of the countries Mary was to cross. "For we do esteem her," added His Holiness, "not only as a woman of great prudence and of extraordinary courage and powers of mind, but what is much more, we consider her as a holy and great servant of God. You who go with her, obey and serve her, for as long as you do this, you will do well."

These words of praise were, as we may easily believe, carefully treasured and scrupulously written down by her companions. Coming from those august lips, were they not a victorious answer to the accusations brought against their beloved Mother and Foundress, and an eloquent vindication of her conduct?

Mary left Rome in a litter, and passed through Florence, Bologna, Milan, and Vercelli. At Turin, the Papal Nuncio, Mgr. Caffarelli, insisted on her accepting his hospitality, and sent her in his carriage to the foot of Mount Cenis. The mountain was crossed on November 11th in a violent snow-storm, and the lives of the party were saved by the instinct of a little dog, which led them correctly on their way after the guides had lost the path.

She proceeded to Paris, where she waited until the winter was over to continue her journey through France and the Low Countries, travelling safely in spite of the dangers arising from the Thirty Years' War then raging. At Spa Mary found that God had prepared her an opportunity of practising charity to her neighbour, and instead of availing herself of the remedies the place

offered for the relief of her own sufferings, she immediately began to nurse a lady well known there, who was dying of a cancer. To the remonstrances of her companions she would simply reply: "So I do what my Master sent me for, what imports it whether I recover?" With her usual unselfishness, Mary continued to attend the poor patient, and finally prevailed on her to receive the last Sacraments, which she had persistently refused until then. The peaceful and edifying death of the sufferer was the reward of Mary's devotion and charity.

The season at Spa being over, Mary went to stay at Stavelot, near Liège, close to the Royal Benedictine Abbey, of which her friend, Ferdinand of Bavaria, the Prince Bishop of Liège, was commendatory Abbot. This journey brought back most painful memories. There, seventeen years before, she had left two flourishing houses, and schools which were producing the best results. On beholding the ruin of her work, caused in part by the ill-advised conduct of some of the members, Mary had not a word of complaint or blame. She did not even betray by a sigh or an expression of sadness what must have passed in her soul. "Who

but I should suffer and excuse their faults," said she in a gentle tone when speaking of those of her children who had hastened on the fatal blow.

From Liège Mary set out for England, travelling *via* St. Omer, the cradle of the Institute and witness of her early religious aspirations. Here, with the holy enthusiasm of youth, she had sown the first seeds of a work which, although then well-nigh annihilated, was to rise again with a new vigour and bear fruit in proportion as the grain of seed had sunk deeper in the fertile soil of tribulation and adversity. Renewing her total submission to the inscrutable designs of her Master, Mary would not allow a thought of bitterness nor even the shadow of disappointment to disturb the serenity of her soul. Here the painted life* comes to our aid, and shows us how God, during her short stay in St. Omer, came to comfort the soul of his servant, showing her by divine

* A series of fifty pictures in oil, representing in chronological order the history of Mary Ward. They date from about 1689, and were probably executed at the desire of Mary's first companions. An inscription in German of the same period explains the subject of each picture. This precious collection and most valuable historical evidence is preserved in the house of the Institute at Augsburg, Bavaria.

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revelation* a fruitful and happy future for her Institute. It was with the firm hope of seeing these promises fulfilled that Mary and her companions left for London, where they arrived in May, 1639.

* The remembrance of this vision is recalled in the forty-ninth picture of the series of the painted life. She beheld in it an unknown bishop, God revealing to her that he would one day befriend her Institute. The Sisters believed him to be John Christopher von Freising, Bishop of Augsburg in 1665, a friend of Mary Pointz, who declared himself the protector of the English Ladies and gave them the privileges of religious.

CHAPTER IX.

IN the summer, previous to her departure from Liège, Mary had written to the Pope asking for letters of introduction to the Queen of England. Cardinal Barberini accordingly wrote in the Pope's name to Queen Henrietta Maria, speaking of Mary Ward as one "much esteemed in Rome both for her well-known qualities and piety, which will no doubt cause your Majesty to see and hear her." He begs the Queen "to show all the kindness she can to her and her company." This letter from the Pope's nephew is dated August 28th, 1638, and it secured for Mary a most cordial welcome from Queen Henrietta, who, as early as the end of June, 1639, granted her a private audience, an account of which Mary hastened to forward to his Eminence Cardinal Barberini. The Apostolic Nuncio, likewise, Mgr. Rosetti, who had recently been sent to sustain her Majesty in her perilous post, and be of comfort to the oppressed Catholics, at Urban's desire gave Mary all the moral support he could.

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We can well imagine the joy, not altogether unmixed, of the meeting of Mary and her fellow workers on their native soil. Her return was the signal for all the members, who were then in various places occupied in charitable works, to come together. Mary soon saw herself surrounded by some of the early companions of her youth and others who had enrolled themselves under her banner, when the difficulties to which the Institute was subjected would have been sufficient to make the stoutest heart waver. Among them we find Frances Bedingfield, destined to play an important part in the subsequent history of the Institute, and Isabella Layton, a convert, the only daughter of a wealthy London merchant. This lady gave up her right to an inheritance rather than forsake the faith, and joined the English Ladies as a lay Sister. Her piety and spirit of self-sacrifice were exemplary. She too volunteered to go out, like her Bavarian sister, to beg for the food of the needy Community, and to relieve the hard lot of the Catholic prisoners. When thus employed, she would carry heavy loads through the streets of London, unmindful of the contempt to which she thereby exposed herself.

Mary's new abode in London, it is commonly believed, was in St. Martin's Lane. Her house soon became an object of attraction to priests and to Catholic visitors of all ranks and age, who would come to her for advice, encouragement, and light.

In spite of the frequent attacks of her cruel malady, Mary, who could not brook delay when souls were concerned, with the co-operation of her faithful companions, began the work of education, to which she joined other works of charity required of them by the sad circumstances of the times. She gave herself up with a new ardour to the life of zeal and charity she had again undertaken. Since the suppression she had put on the dress usual to persons of rank ; but, true to her spirit of poverty, she would only wear old and threadbare garments. She prized that virtue so highly that as she said, "it was to be entertained not like a beggar but like a queen." Still, relates Mary Pointz, her distinguished manner and noble bearing made it appear as if she were really well dressed ; and certain evil-minded persons even reproached her for the elegance of her attire.

No sooner was it known that Mary meant to make a long stay in England than friends

and acquaintances hastened to entrust her with the training of their daughters, many of whom were of high birth and position. But Mary, always on the look out for opportunities of helping the poor and the needy, added others to their number who were not able to pay, so that in spite of her poverty and "notwithstanding the dangers of the times, she kept a great family."

In the midst of this revival, Mary could not hide from herself that the state of political and religious affairs was growing darker every day. The House of Commons was in open rebellion against Royal authority, and the departure of the King and Queen had left the capital a prey to the religious fanaticism and hatred of the rebels. Mary's peaceful residence became an object of suspicion. The searches of pursuivants increased to such an extent that at last there were as many as four such visits within twenty-four hours. The danger of the situation compelled Mary to seek another shelter for the Sisters and their pupils. She therefore determined to retire into Yorkshire, where she could carry on the work of education, and where her chapel might afford the Catholic inhabitants of the place the rare privilege of practising

their religion without molestation. At the beginning of May, Mary and her household moved northward from London to Hutton Rudby, in Yorkshire, an isolated property belonging to her cousin, John Ingleby, a staunch Catholic. The house was in the neighbourhood of an ancient place of pilgrimage at the Carthusian monastery of Mount Grace, and recommended itself for its secluded position. Mary took possession of her new home on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Her first care was to fit up a chapel where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, to the great joy of the poor Catholics of the various villages round. Several months passed by in the quiet enjoyment of relatively peaceful times, when a report was brought to the inmates of Hutton Rudby that a party of Parliamentarians were approaching and that their house was to be searched. Mary Ward immediately called all her household to prayer, and when the dreaded visitors came, her courteous message to the captain of the troop satisfied him, and though he had come to look for trunks of gold and armour supposed to be hidden in the house, he rode off without any further inquiries. No doubt the devotion of the poor inhabitants

of the place to Mary and her companions shielded them from what otherwise might have had grave consequences. This popularity was nothing wonderful to those who knew Mary's love for the poor. Anyone in trouble or distress was sure of her most special care. She loved to talk to the poor, to serve them, to be employed about them; she would not allow any but kind words to be used in speaking to them, and when she had not what they asked for, she would often borrow or buy for them rather than dismiss them with a refusal. After the unexpected visit of the troops, Mary thought of organising a plan of defence which would for the future protect her and hers from further disturbance. She proposed that all should daily say a Pater and ten Aves in honour of the nine choirs of angels, and the Litany of the saints and angels. Mary had indeed a great devotion to those holy spirits, and every day said some prayer to the three Archangels and to the twenty-eight angel Guardians of her Sisters, as well as to her own and that of the Pope.

In spite of the many advantages to be found at Hutton Rudby, Mary was induced to leave it on account of the grave inconvenience caused by its distance from any city.

The difficulty arising from the transmission and receipt of letters was a cause of serious inconvenience, and the uncertainty of communication with those of her Institute, either in England or abroad, a source of constant anxiety. She therefore took a house at Hewarth, near York, where she continued the same life of devotion as at Hutton Rudby. Her first care, as before, was to open a chapel, and as two priests were there constantly, Mass was said daily. Here again Mary was able to be of much service to the poor Catholics, and received many persons of the neighbourhood who were attracted by the great charm of her conversation, the sweetness of her manner, and above all the spiritual profit they derived from their intercourse with her. Mary, moreover, desired that all her Sisters should cultivate this power of doing good; she wished them to be easy of access, to be liberal in their charities and courtesies; to avoid affectation; and she told them "not to keep people in suspense, but to be prompt and ready in giving each one satisfaction, not willingly enduring that those who asked them should be in need of anything which depended on themselves to give, or in which

they could console their neighbour, either by counsel or whatever else."

These good works were sadly interrupted by the siege of York, when Mary was compelled to take refuge in that city with her beloved Community. She herself wished to remain in Hewarth, trusting more to God's powerful aid than to any human protection. "Fear not," she said, "we will place St. Michael at one end of the village and St. Joseph at the other, and put the power of the great cannon and pieces on the Sacred Name of Jesus, which will keep them from hurting." Six weeks of the siege she spent, much against her will, within the city, and on returning to Hewarth she found the house in the most desolate condition, as four hundred soldiers had been quartered there. The chapel, however, and Mary's room had been respected in a wonderful way.

The Parliamentary soldiers were keeping so strict a watch on the houses of Catholics that the Sisters at Hewarth were deprived of the privilege of holy Mass from St. Ann's Day until the Feast of All Saints. Mary had also the anxiety of being left, from the beginning of the war, entirely without [news from her Sisters in London and, of

course, from those in Rome and Munich. To allay her anxiety, her faithful Winefred undertook a journey to London on foot, although over sixty years of age. Travelling was then not without grave perils on account of the war, and Winefred's companions expressed their well-grounded fears about it. Mary reassured them, saying: "Do not fear, she will return safely; she will be in time to help you to bury me"—words which, as we shall see, were subsequently verified.

Towards the Feast of All Saints the state of Mary's health became alarming. Her strength visibly diminished, and the anxiety of the devoted Sisters at this time was intense. What added to their grief was the difficulty of procuring for their dear Mother those spiritual helps which she herself had been ever diligent in procuring for souls at the supreme moment. Catholics were so rigorously watched, the searches of the pursuivants so frequent, that it was impossible to keep a priest concealed in the house. But to the joy of all, at Christmas a missionary unexpectedly arrived. Mary, feeling her end approaching, begged he would give her Extreme Unction. The priest, not considering death so imminent, did not accede

to her wish, and Mary submitted without a word. She made a general confession, which she knew would be her last. After a week's stay, the missionary was obliged to leave Hewarth, the state of things being too dangerous to allow him to remain, and Mary abandoned herself to God's holy Will, accepting the spiritual privations He was pleased to send her.

On January 13th, 1645, Winefred returned, bringing news from her Sisters in London, which was a great joy to Mary. She grew rapidly worse, and on the 19th asked for a priest, if it were possible to find one. Her companions could not conceal their grief, and Mary took advantage of this outburst of filial attachment to remind them of God's special goodness towards them, of His many favours to them, and exhorted them to unbounded trust in His Providence. She affectionately reproved them for their sadness, and setting them the example of holy cheerfulness, began to sing some hymn of thanksgiving and praise. The hours passed by and God's minister did not come. Mary's children were weeping for the spiritual abandonment and desolation of their beloved Mother in her last hours. She,

however, accepted this last cross her Divine Master offered her, and united it to His own great dereliction. At intervals she took up her canticle of thanksgiving, and without any last agony, whilst kissing her crucifix and uttering the Sacred Name of Jesus three times, she peacefully and joyfully gave up her soul to its Maker.

Thus expired in an obscure corner of her native country this noble soul who had so generously and lovingly spent herself in the service of God, and who had left so many marks of her holiness in the courts and convents of Flanders, Italy, and Germany.

The accounts which Mary's spiritual daughters have left us of their Mother's last moments are truly touching. The serenity of her soul was reflected in her face, beautified by suffering and illuminated with the spiritual joy which is the portion of souls closely united with their God. The Sisters speak of Mary's last recommendation and parting words: "God will assist you and help you," she said; "and when He has given me a place, I will serve you."

Mary's mortal remains were placed in a Protestant cemetery, near the door of the church of St. Helena in Osbaldwick. Perse-

cuted from the cradle to the tomb, the English Catholics of those days had reason to fear for the bodies of their dead. They possessed no churchyard of their own, and had to avoid at all cost anything that might be an indication of the religious belief of the deceased, as otherwise the tomb would have probably been exposed to profanation. This explains what Mary's Sisters did in the fulfilment of their last painful duties to their Mother. The Protestant minister acceded to their request, and gave orders for the burial of Mary in the cemetery that surrounded the parish church of Osbaldwick.

They wrote on the tombstone the following inscription, where all allusion to the creed of the servant of God was carefully omitted :

TO LOVE THE POORE,
PERSEVER IN THE SAME
LIVE DY AND RISE WITH THEM
WAS ALL THE AYME OF
MARY WARD
WHO HAVING LIVED 60 YEARS
AND 8 DAYS DYED THE
20 OF JAN. 1645.

As in the days of persecution the first Christians had to shelter the memory of

the faithful under the shadow of mystical symbols in use in the catacombs, so during the fearful years of persecution in England, English Catholics, who were equal to the early Christians in heroism and fidelity, had recourse to similar means to secure respect to the sacred remains of their brethren in the faith.

It is uncertain whether the above inscription still stands over the mortal remains of the saintly Mother Mary Ward. There is an ancient, vague tradition in the Institute that, at the beginning of the last century, the Sisters of the York Community had the grave opened and found it empty. Could it be that when Mary's first companions left Hewarth they carried with them the body of their venerated foundress? In this case the removal must have been made with the secrecy which English Catholics were obliged to observe in those dangerous times, and the place where they laid her, like that of her glorious compatriot, Margaret Clitherow, is known only to God and His holy angels.

CHAPTER X.

THOSE who have followed Mary through her stormy life and admired God's wonderful designs regarding her, will no doubt love to linger a little over the development of her work and witness its solemn approbation by the Holy See.

After Mary's death, her companions continued to live in Hewarth for some years, until the renewal of persecution, caused by the establishment of the Commonwealth, and the constant increase of pupils made it necessary for them to seek a refuge abroad. A most unexpected gift which Providence put into the hands of Mary Pointz enabled her to carry out her plan. The pious Marquis of Worcester left a legacy of five hundred pistoles to "his honoured cousin, Mary Pointz, to be disposed of by her for God's greater glory and the propagation of her most virtuous designs and virtuous endeavour." With this timely help Mary transferred the Hewarth Community to Paris, where, under her wise government as Superior, the judicious management of Winefred Wigmore

as head mistress of the boarding-schools, and the co-operation of Catherine Smith, Frances Bedingfield* and others, the house very soon flourished. One of their first cares after this new settlement, was to write the life of their beloved Mother, a task to which Mary Pointz and Winefred Wigmore devoted themselves. A large number of copies of this were made in English and French.†

In 1653 Barbara Babthorpe, to whom Mary Ward, before dying, had entrusted the general direction of the Institute, had taken up her residence in Rome. She, feeling her death approaching, called Mary Pointz to her in order to put the reins of government into her hands. There Mary found the small group of companions who had continued to live together under the protection of the Holy See since Mary Ward's departure for England.

Barbara Babthorpe, who had courageously borne the weight of Superiorship, appointed Mary Pointz as her successor. In a kind of spiritual testament she speaks with the

* Frances belonged to the existing family of the Bedingfields of Oxburgh, remarkable for its noble origin and its attachment to the faith. The ten sisters of Mother Frances embraced the religious state.

† Some copies of these lives are still extant in the archives of the Institute in Nymphenburg (Bavaria).

deepest tenderness of Mary Ward as her "ever dear and happy Mother," of whom she calls herself "the most disloyal servant, the poorest child," and for whose prayers she begs. Barbara Babthorpe died in 1653, and like her namesake and cousin, Barbara Ward, she was buried in the English College in Rome. The inscription on her tombstone witnesses to her having governed the Institute of Virgins with gentleness and wisdom, a new proof that the existence of the Institute was allowed in Rome and that the Sisters had practised their way of life openly. Mary Pointz took up the government of the houses then existing in England, Bavaria, Paris, and Rome with the prudence and devotion which had characterised her predecessor. She attempted, with the support of his Lordship, John Christopher von Friesing, a new foundation in Augsburg, and succeeded beyond all expectation. The Bishop took the Sisters under his protection, declared them to be true religious, gave them an annual revenue, and interested himself warmly in their work of education. Mary Pointz died in 1667 at Augsburg, where she was, by an exceptional favour, buried in the Cathedral. With her death, the Institute

lost the last of Mary's first companions, as Winefred had already gone to receive the reward of a full and saintly life in 1657, when in Paris.

There remained a great number of Sisters who had had the privilege of living with their Foundress, and who had imbibed her spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to the young. One of these, Frances Bedingfield, had joined the Institute at the age of sixteen, and lived in Rome and London under Mary Ward, and later on was sent to Paris. She was recalled to England to make new settlements at Hammersmith and York. The first of these foundations was protected and helped by the Queens Catherine of Braganza and Mary Beatrice of Modena. The second, in York, which still exists and is known under the name of the Bar Convent, owes its existence in great measure to the munificence of a pious and generous benefactor, Sir Thomas Gascoigne. Frances, who was a woman of great ability, governed her Community in the true spirit of Mary Ward. Once she had to defend her charge against the attacks and insults of mob fanaticism. The convent was assailed by a crowd of armed men who threatened its destruction.

Frances—the measures dictated by prudence having been taken—ordered all the doors to be closed, then taking the sacred Ciborium from the chapel, hid it in her bosom, and surrounded by her Sisters, knelt at the main entrance of the house, over which she had hung a picture of St. Michael, and confidently exclaimed: “Great God, save Yourself, as we cannot save You!” All at once the infuriated mob stopped their loud cries of “No popery” and dispersed. The nuns were saved, the house unharmed, and the aggressors compelled by a mysterious force to abandon their plan. Some reliable witnesses of the scene related afterwards how, at the moment of the attack, they saw over the convent a tall personage on a white charger, brandishing his sword, which so terrified the crowd that they fled and never again attempted to renew the assault.

One can scarcely exaggerate the benefit derived by the Catholics of the north from the presence of the Sisters. They kept the faith alive in the midst of the people in spite of persecution and dangers, and fostered its growth by their example and the pious and solid education they imparted to the young.

Affectionate and sisterly relations continued

to exist between the houses of the Institute and Munich, where the Chief Superior had taken up her residence. In 1693, Catherine Dawson, whom Mary herself had formed, occupied that difficult post. Encouraged by the general appreciation of the Institute, by the protection of the Bishops in Germany and by her own desire to secure such an advantage, she solicited its solemn approbation from Pope Innocent XII. Her petition was laid before the Congregation of the Council. The Bull of Urban VIII and the absence of enclosure proved insurmountable obstacles, and the petition was rejected. Catherine Dawson died holily three years after, in 1696, after having ruled over the Institute for thirty-three years. Her zeal for the stability of the Institute had paved the way for her successor, who was destined to win the favour Catherine had failed to obtain.

It was under her that Helena Catesby, who had attached herself to Mary Ward from the age of nine, founded the house of Burg-hausen in 1683. The difficulties that beset Helena in her undertaking were exceptionally wearisome. Leave to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel was only obtained after ten years of prayers, fasts, and penances

on the part of the Sisters. This privation must have been an acute trial to Helena, whose love for the Blessed Sacrament was so intense as to cause her to spend six or seven hours on her knees before the Tabernacle, and this even when worn out with infirmities, old age and labour. She died in 1701 in Burghausen.

The choice of a successor to Catherine Dawson fell on Mary Agnes Barbara Babthorpe. Nothing daunted by the failure Catherine had met with, she at once set her heart on renewing the attempt to secure the recognition of the Institute from the Holy See. An extensive system of intercessory prayer was set on foot, and she had all the papers and documents classified so as to be ready for inspection. She also organised with minute care the various houses of the Congregation, and tried to win to her cause the Saints in heaven, the princes of the Church, and the highly placed. The prayers of so many were finally heard, and the English Ladies, with the valuable support of the Elector of Bavaria, Max Emanuel, their friend and protector, had at last the consolation of seeing their Institute sanctioned and their Rules approved by the reigning

Pontiff, Clement XI. This success was not attained without great difficulties. The objections put forward in 1693 were renewed; the office of Chief Superior met with opposition as a novelty; but a statement was drawn up by Fr. L. Lessius showing that the office was not of jurisdiction but only a means for promoting union and securing exact observance and mutual help in time of difficulty. Clement closed the discussion by saying: "*Lasciate governare le donne dalle donne.*" "Let women govern women." The Bull of confirmation was issued on June 13, 1703, and thus, after a long period of vicissitudes and trials, the first sanction was granted to the new form of life for religious women adopted by Mary Ward and her followers.

The great spiritual blessings connected with the Papal approbation, whilst giving a fresh impetus to the work of the Institute, made its extension comparatively easy. New and important foundations were undertaken, chief among them being Mindelheim, St. Pölten, Bamberg, Altötting, and Aschaffenburg. Mother Francesca Hauserin, who had governed the last-named house for the space of twenty years, was chosen Chief Superior after the death of Mother Magdalen von

Schnegg. It was upon her election that the Institute underwent a new and unforeseen trial in the differences that arose between the house in Mindelheim and the Bishop of Augsburg, which threatened the original organisation under a Chief Superior. The cause was brought to Rome in 1745, and it ended on the whole in favour of the Institute by the final establishment of the office of General Superior. It is not the place here to enter into the particulars of the long and acute controversy that followed, but it will sufficiently explain the difficulties of this critical period if we add that Benedict XIV in order to safeguard the very existence of the Congregation, then in danger, inserted a clause in his famous Bull "*Quamvis justo*" to the purport that the members of the Institute could not then call Mary Ward their foundress.*

This storm over, the work of the Congregation continued unimpeded until the dark days of the secularisation in Germany, when the King of Bavaria, Max Joseph, in 1809,

* The prudential motives which dictated this declaration no longer existing, Pope Pius X, by a Decree issued on April 20, 1909, finally granted the withdrawal of this restriction, and henceforth the Institute may, as before the Bull "*Quamvis justo*," acknowledge Mary Ward as their only and legitimate foundress.

ordered all the religious houses in his kingdom to be closed. Augsburg alone escaped. In Munich the Paradeiser Haus and all the property of the Sisters was taken. The vault, where so many of their dead members had been buried for more than a hundred years, was to be closed and the bodies brought to the public cemetery. Amongst others, those of the General Superior, Baroness von Hauserin, and Josepha von Mansdorf, showed no trace of decay. The then General Superior only survived these events two years, and no one was appointed in her place.

It was during this disastrous period that the Irish branch* of the Institute was founded by Mother Teresa Ball, who had received her religious training in York. This important offshoot, like the parent stem, devoted itself to the work of education. It grew and spread its beneficial influence, not only in Ireland, but in all the missionary countries where it now numbers many large and flourishing houses.

The trouble of the period of secularisation being over, King Louis I of Bavaria petitioned for some members of the Augsburg

* Rathfarnham, head house of the Loreto Branch.

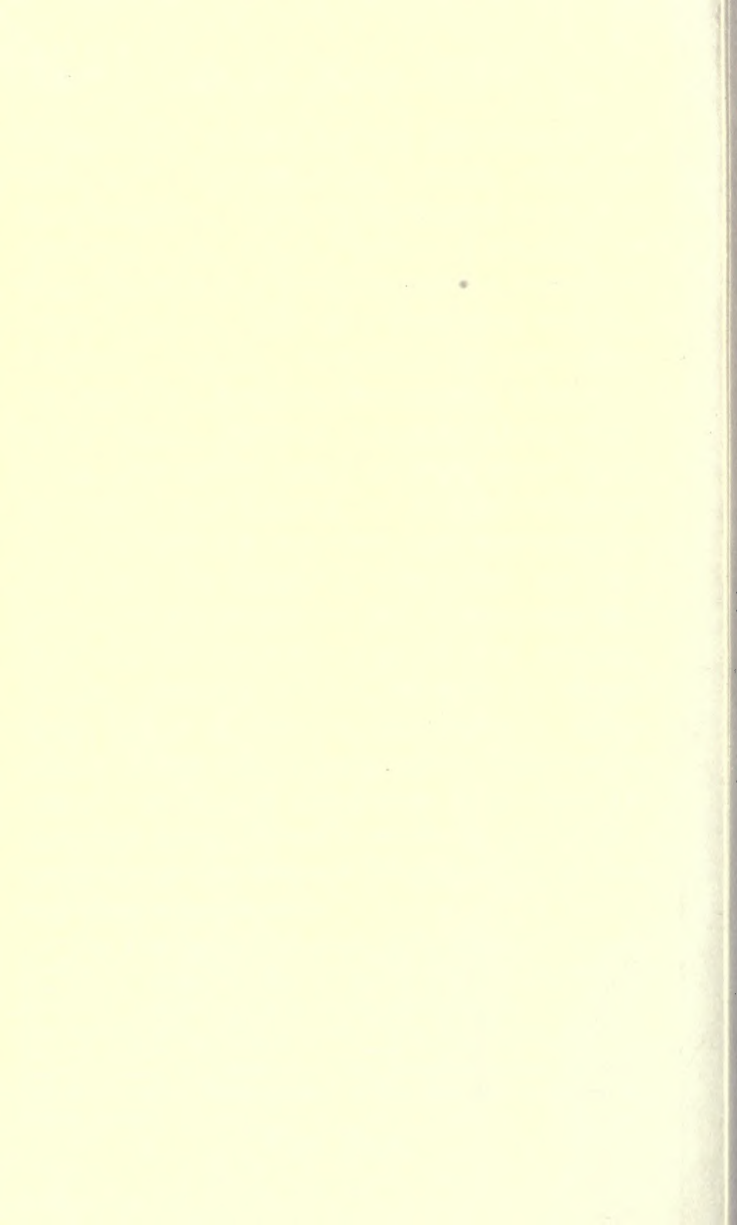
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Community to take up the direction of the schools at Nymphenburg, which, since the secularisation, had been conducted by secular teachers. In 1840 Mother Catherine de Graccho was appointed Superior-General by Pope Gregory XVI, and from that date the Institute rapidly increased, houses arose in Bavaria, Austria, Roumania, Hungary, Italy, Spain, America, Canada, India, Australia, and Africa, and the work done by its members was blessed as if God willed to console them for the trials and desolation of the past. In England, where the last survivors of the Hammersmith Community had died out at the beginning of the century, Mother Barratt, of the Institute at Augsburg, began in 1862 a foundation in Gloucester, which was transferred to London in 1873.* It was in 1877 that Pope Pius IX crowned Mary Ward's work by giving the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary its last and final approbation.

* The Rev. Father Wilberforce, O.P., personal friend and benefactor of the Gloucester Community, was instrumental in the removal to London. In 1885 the Mother-Superior, Mary Joseph Edwards, opened a house in Ascot, Berkshire, and in 1897, at the express wish of His Holiness Leo XIII, of happy memory, started a foundation in Rome where, after an interval of two hundred years, the members of the Institute resumed the work initiated by Mary Ward herself in the first part of the seventeenth century.

THE END.





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Gasquet. Francis Aidan
Life of Mary Ward
AKH-2080 (sk)

